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Environmental Assessment

and

Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation

for

Vaughn - Sun River

East Section NH 3-1 (12) 0 F

West Section NH 3-1 (13) 4 F

Control Number 1504

Cascade County, Montana

Prepared for:

Montana Department of Transportation

Prepared by:

Carter & Burgess, Inc.

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This document is prepared in conformance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) requirements and contains the information required for an Environmental Assessment under the provisions of ARM 18.2.237(2) and 18.2.239. It is also prepared in conformance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements for an Environmental Assessment under 23 CFR 771.119.

Submitted Pursuant to 42 USC 4332(2)(c) 49 U.S.C. 303
and Sections 2-3-104, 75-1-201 M.C.A.
by the
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
and the
Montana Department of Transportation

Submitted by:

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Date: 1/25/00

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Date: 2-8-2000

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Executive Summary

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) proposes to improve the 12.1-kilometer (7.5-mile) segment of US Highway 89 from Vaughn to Sun River in Cascade County, Montana. This segment of US Highway 89 functions as a principal rural facility and is currently a two-lane roadway. Completion of the proposed improvements to this segment would create a safe facility of sufficient capacity for a twenty-year design horizon. Two alternatives were evaluated including the No-Action Alternative and the Preferred Alternative.

Reference Post/Milepost (RP/MP) signs located along this roadway segment do not match those used in the road log. MDT found that the distance from RP/MP 0 to RP/MP 1 was less than 1.6 kilometers (1 mile). For the purpose of this Environmental Assessment, actual reference posts/mileposts were calculated using a metric scale and the design plans. From this point forward all calculated (actual) reference posts/mileposts will be referred to as Reference Post (RP). Actual RP signs along the roadway do not concur. Actual RP 1 is 0.74 kilometer (0.46 of a mile) from the project beginning.

The purpose and need for these proposed improvements to US 89 is to improve overall safety conditions for motorists. This includes providing better system continuity and regional access by reducing local congestion and improving local traffic flow.

The proposed improvements (Preferred Alternative) would include replacement of two existing bridge structures and widening the existing two-lane facility to a four-lane roadway. The four-lane roadway would start at RP .54 actual and would continue to the east side of Vaughn. A five-lane roadway with a center two-way left turn lane (TWLTL) is proposed from the east side of Vaughn to the intersection of Montana 200. Included in the improvements is a plan for a 0.85 kilometer (0.53 mile) long bicycle path that would begin on the north side of the highway at Fourth Street in Vaughn. The bicycle path would cross under to the south side of the highway and end at Twelfth Street. The Preferred Alternative has a design speed of 100 kph (60 mph) in all sections except through the Town of Vaughn where 70 kph (45 mph) would be used. All horizontal and vertical curves would be designed and constructed to meet accepted design standards for this type of the facility.

An assessment of environmental impacts of these proposed actions is included in Chapter Three of this document. Major issues and findings of the environmental assessment include:

- The Preferred Alternative would provide a more safe and consistent roadway section to accommodate existing and future traffic volumes along US Highway 89.
- The Preferred Alternative is consistent with Cascade County Development planning. The Preferred Alternative is on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan for the Year 2000.

- It is estimated that noise impacts from the highway would occur at approximately eight residences along the corridor by the year 2020.

- The Preferred Alternative would result in impacts to approximately 0.89 hectare (2.2 acres) of wetlands.

- Right-of-way acquisition of approximately 27.13 hectares (67.03 acres) from 125 parcels would be necessary.

Mitigation for the impacts described above is also described in Chapter Four of this document.

1.0 Purpose and Need for Action

1.1 Study Area Description

The project study area is located along a 12.1 kilometer (7.5 mile) segment of US Highway 89 (Primary Route 3), between the Towns of Vaughn and Sun River in Cascade County, Montana. (See Figures 1-1 and 1-2.) The study area is within Section 19 of Township 21 North, Range 2 East of the Montana Principal Meridian; Sections 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 of Township 21 North, Range 1 East of the Montana Principal Meridian; and Sections 25 and 26 of Township 21 North, Range 1 West of the Montana Principal Meridian.

US Highway 89 between Vaughn and Sun River travels through rolling terrain primarily used for irrigated farming and grazing with distinctive grade changes over the Muddy Creek and Burlington Northern Railroad (BNRR). The beginning of the project is at RP 0.54, about 313 meters (1027 feet) west of I-15 and east of the BNRR Overpass Bridge. The project extends westerly through the Town of Vaughn to RP 8.12, near the junction with Primary Route 24 (Montana 200) and approximately 1.6 km. (1 mile) east of the Town of Sun River.

1.2 Existing Road Description

The existing facility is a two-lane roadway with unpaved shoulders. Beginning at RP 0.54 on the east side of the project area, the first 1.5 kilometer (1.0 mile) section was built in 1936 and improved in 1982. This section is 9.75 meters (32 feet) wide including shoulders. The next 3.0 kilometer (1.9 mile) segment, build in 1955 and improved in 1971, is 9.75 meters (32 feet) wide, including shoulders. The last 7.10 kilometer (4.7 miles) section, extending to the western end of the project area at RP 8.12 is 9.75 meters (32 feet) wide, including shoulders. This section was built in 1936 and improved in 1982. The condition of the existing paved surface is in poor condition. Figure 1-3 depicts a typical cross-section of the existing roadway. The existing bridges at the BNRR overpass and Muddy Creek were built in 1955 and are in poor condition.

The road is classified as a principal rural facility with no curb and gutter or sidewalk. Local ingress and egress is not controlled by stop signs or stop lights.

1.3 Preferred Alternative Description

The Preferred Alternative (shown in Figure 1-4) is a combination of a four-lane cross-section from the project beginning to the east side of Vaughn [approximately .63 kilometers (.39 miles)], blending to a four-lane travel way with a 4.2-meter (14-foot) wide two-way left turn lane (TWLTL). Figure 1-5 depicts the areas of proposed laneage for the Preferred Alternative. These proposed sections then transition to a two-lane roadway at the project end near Montana 200 at Sun River. The Preferred Alternative has a design speed of 100 kph (60 mph) in all sections except through the Town of Vaughn where 70 kph (45 mph) would be used.

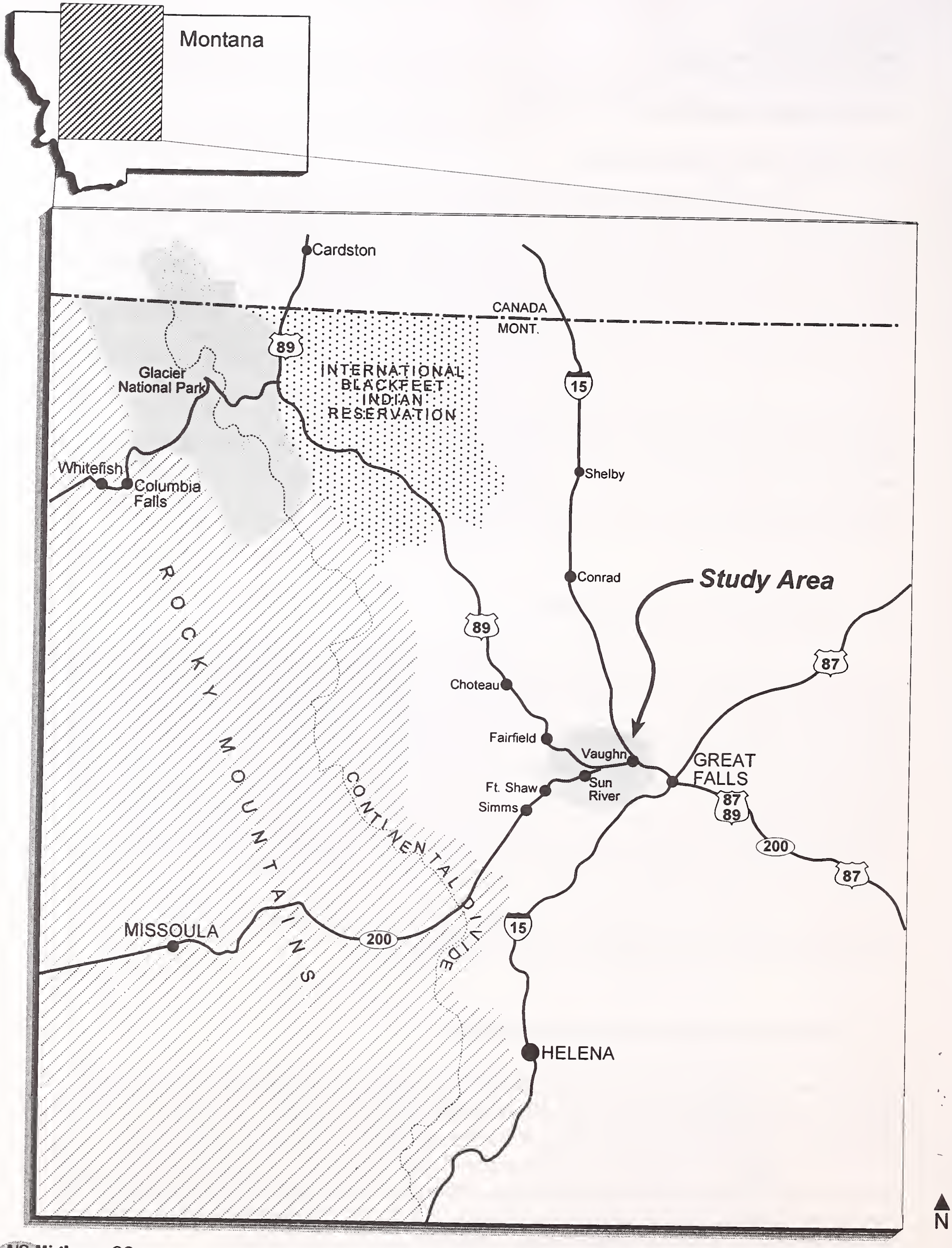


Figure 1-1
Regional Vicinity Map

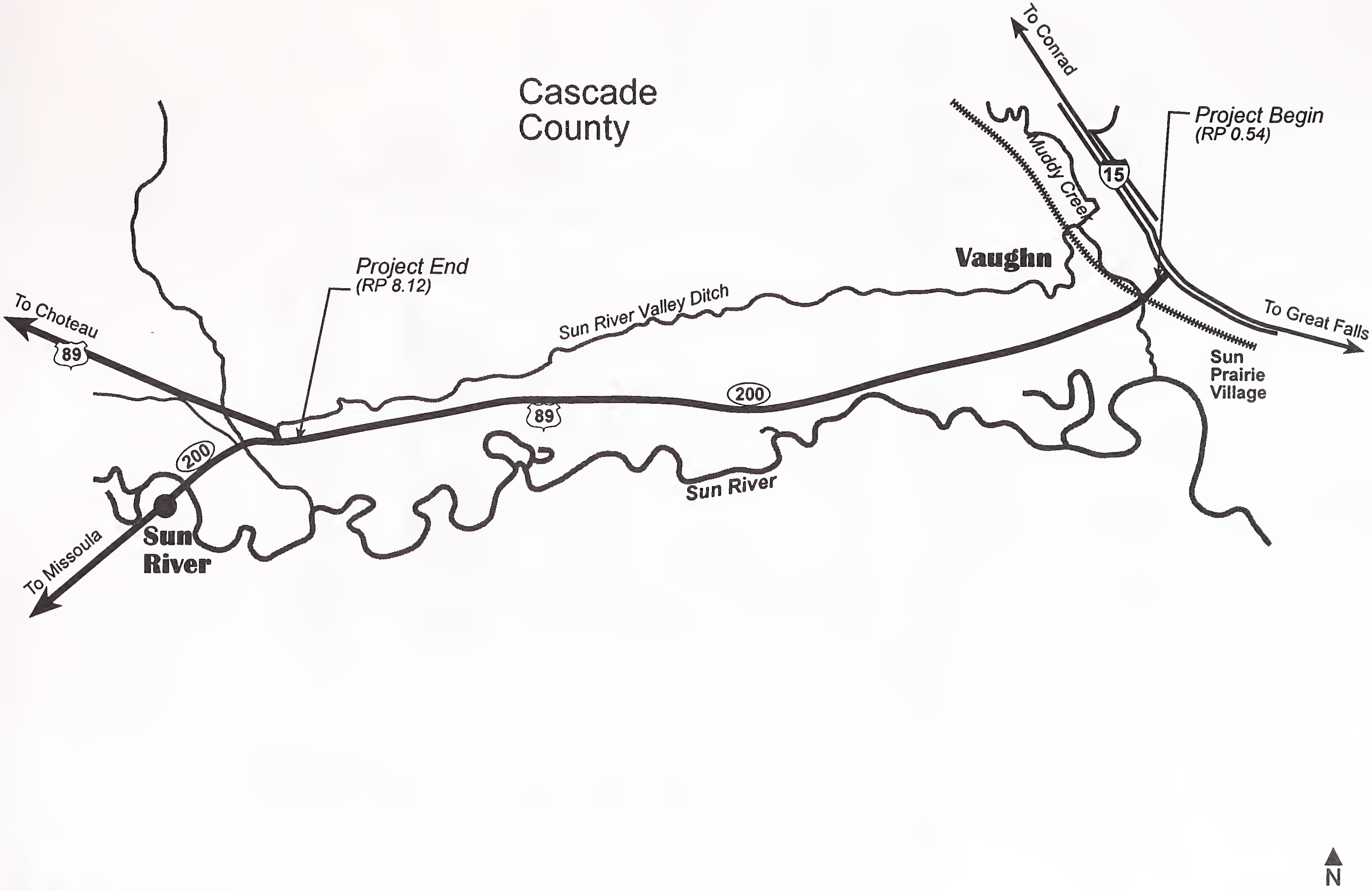
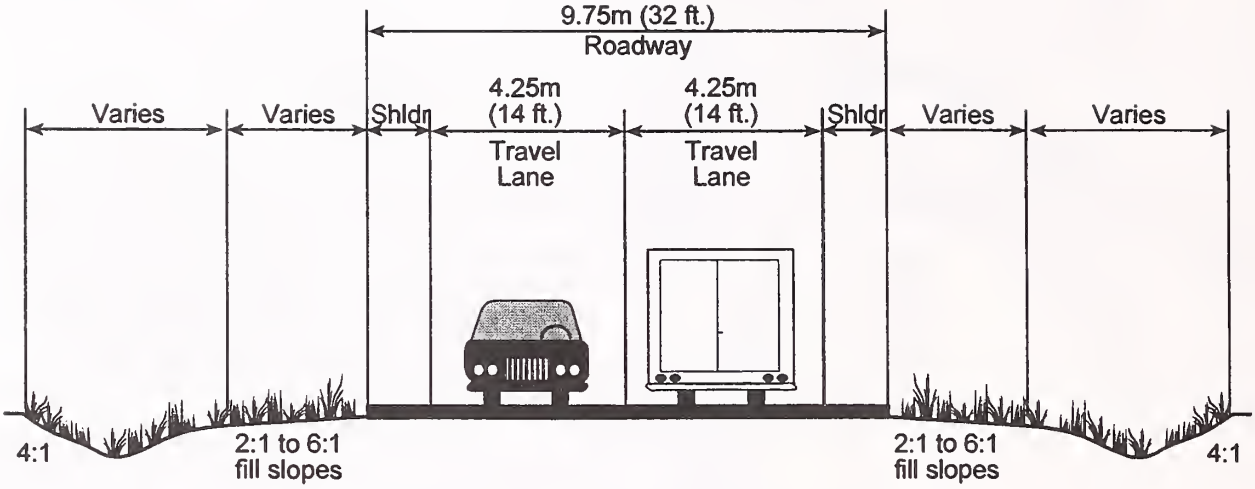


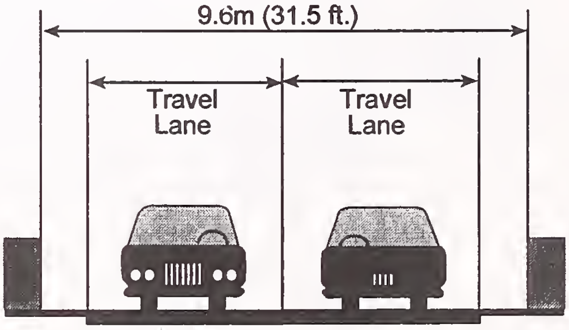
Figure 1-2

Project Area

US Highway 89
Vaughn to Sun River Junction, Montana
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT



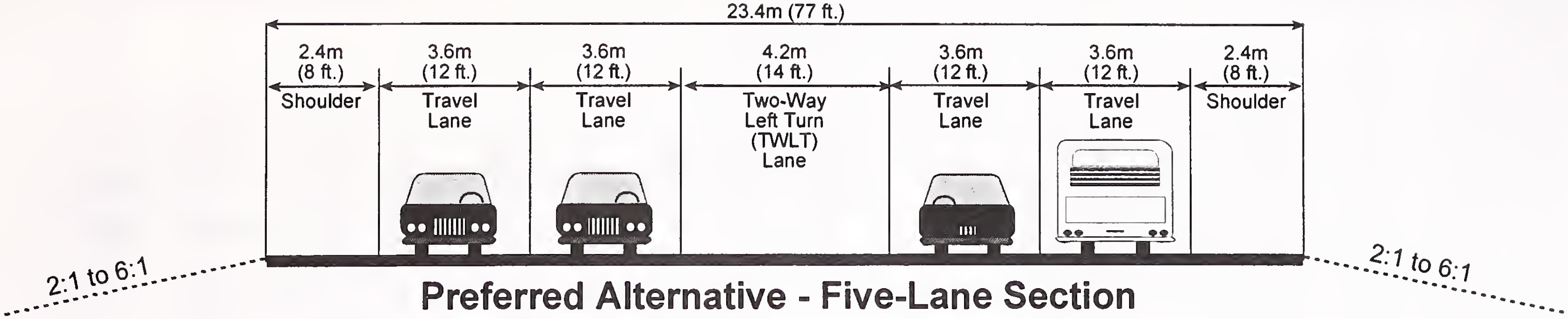
Typical Roadway Section



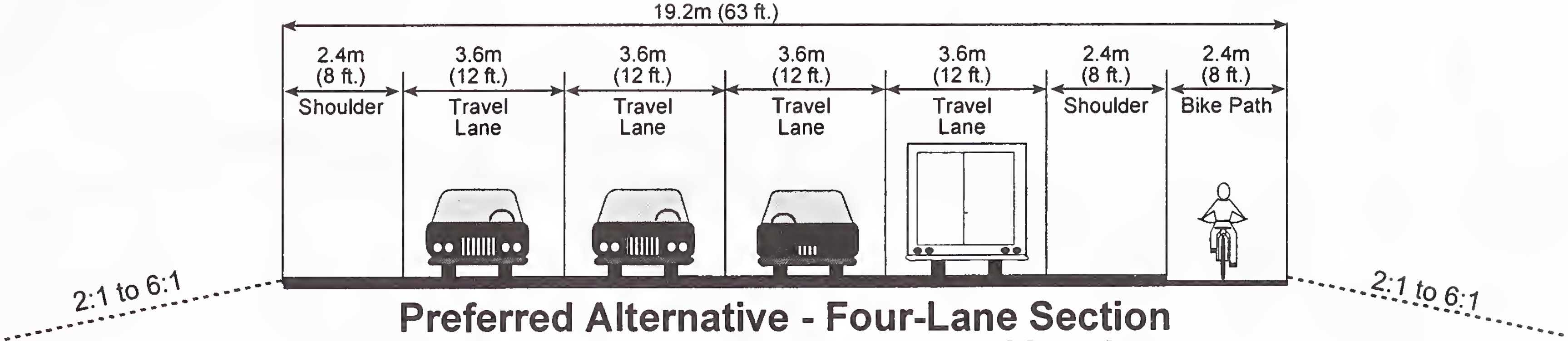
Existing Bridge Sections at BNRR and Muddy Creek

Figure 1-3

Existing Bridge and Roadway Sections


23.4m (77 ft.)
2.4m (8 ft.) Shoulder
3.6m (12 ft.) Travel Lane
3.6m (12 ft.) Travel Lane
4.2m (14 ft.) Two-Way Left Turn (TWLT) Lane
3.6m (12 ft.) Travel Lane
3.6m (12 ft.) Travel Lane
2.4m (8 ft.) Shoulder
2:1 to 6:1
2:1 to 6:1

Preferred Alternative - Five-Lane Section


19.2m (63 ft.)
2.4m (8 ft.) Shoulder
3.6m (12 ft.) Travel Lane
3.6m (12 ft.) Travel Lane
3.6m (12 ft.) Travel Lane
3.6m (12 ft.) Travel Lane
2.4m (8 ft.) Shoulder
2.4m (8 ft.) Bike Path
2:1 to 6:1
2:1 to 6:1

Preferred Alternative - Four-Lane Section Bridge Decks and Approach to Vaughn

*The proposed bike path begins at 4th Street on the west and continues easterly toward 12th Street. The trail would parallel the highway to the north for 330 meters (1,089 feet), cross US Highway 89 through a culvert approximately 3.0 meters by 4.0 meters (10 feet by 14 feet), and continue parallel on the south for 580 meters (1,650 feet).

Figure 1-4

Preferred Alternative Cross-Sections

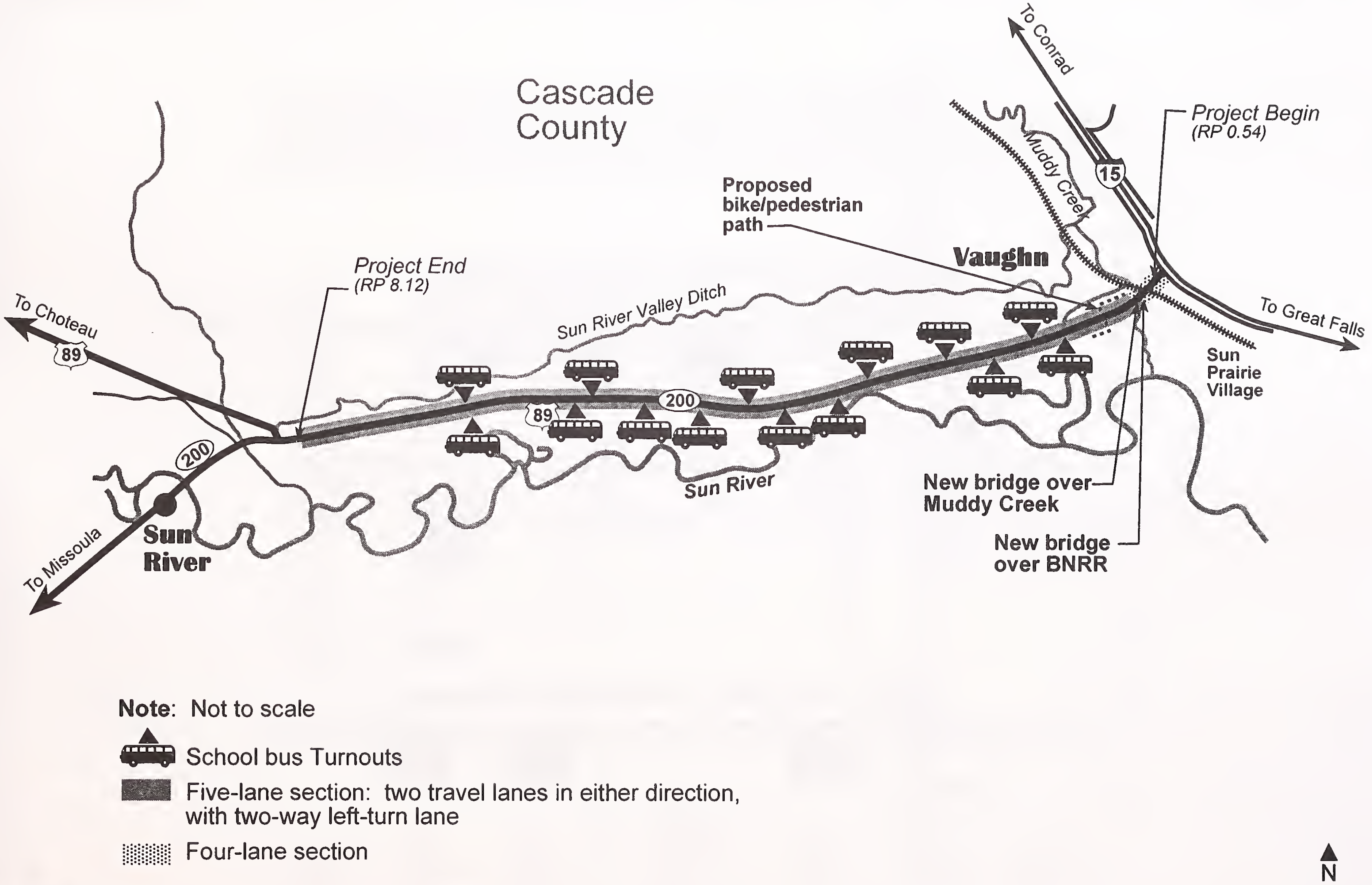


Figure 1-5

Preferred Alternative

Design speed is the maximum safe speed that can be maintained over a specified section of highway when conditions are favorable so that the design features of the highway govern. US 89 has been designed to be safely negotiated at a speed of 60 m.p.h. or 100 km/h. The new centerline would generally follow or parallel the existing alignment from 4.5 meters (15 feet) to 9.1 meters (30 feet) and shifting to the north or south of the existing centerline.

Design features assumed as a part of the Preferred Alternative include:

- Pedestrian/Bicycle Path
- School Bus turnouts to drop-off and pick-up students
- New bridges over the Burlington Northern Railroad and Muddy Creek
- Truck and mailbox turnouts
- Widened shoulders
- A two-way left-turn lane between actual RP .92 and actual RP 8.05
- Updated guardrails
- Improved sight distance by improving vertical alignment
- New signing and striping

All details have been developed based on preliminary design plans and specific features may change as final design plans are developed.

1.4 Overview

The primary purpose and need for improvements to US Highway 89 is to:

- Improve overall safety conditions for motorists.
- Provide for system continuity for local and commuter traffic between Great Falls, Vaughn, Sun River, Fort Shaw, and Simms.
- Improve regional access for motorists travelling to Glacier National Park, Missoula and Choteau.
- Reduce congestion caused by slow moving trucks, farming equipment, recreation vehicles, and by traffic slowing to turn into adjacent residential areas.
- Allow for the continuation of traffic flow when school buses stop for pick-up and drop-off of children.

1.5 Accidents/Safety

Accident data along US Highway 89 was collected by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) for years between January 1990 and December 1996. There were 125 recorded accidents that were investigated in the project corridor, during this time period, seven of which were fatal accidents. Twenty-eight percent of these accidents involved vehicles striking fixed objects such as: bridge approaches, fences, guardrails and poles.

The accident rate and severity rate for all vehicles for this project is higher than the statewide average. The accident rate is a calculation of number of accidents per million vehicle miles of travel. A review of the accident statistics for this project revealed an accident rate of 1.44 and a severity rate of 1.62 compared to the statewide rural primary average of 1.27 and 1.52, respectively (see Figure 1-6). The accident rate is approximately 25 percent higher than the state average, except for the truck accident rate. The truck accident rate and severity rate is 0.67 and 3.4 compared to the statewide rural primary average of 1.01 and 1.53 respectively (see Figure 1-7). In addition, two pedestrian accidents were reported.

1.6 Congestion

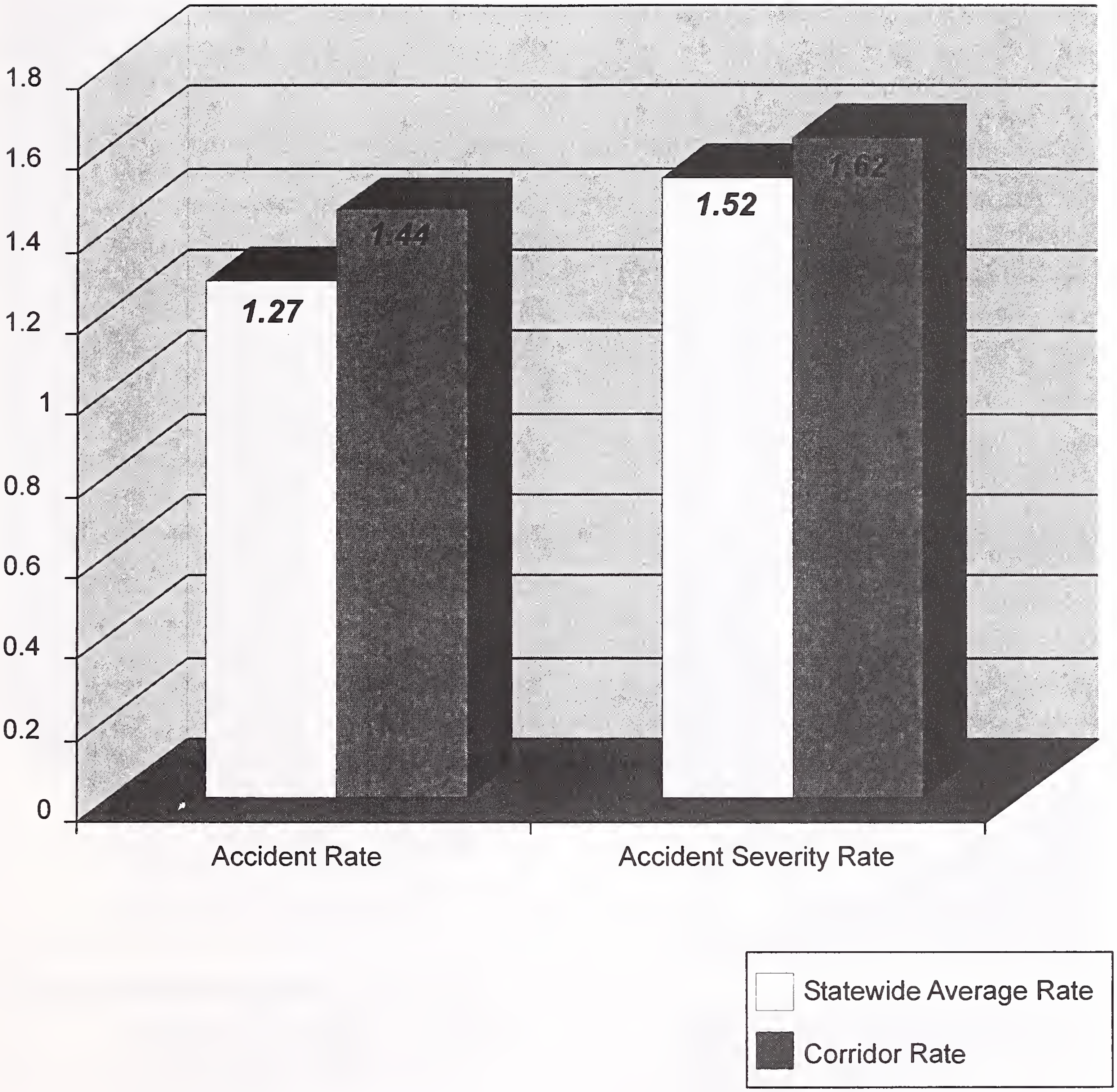
Level of Service (LOS) provides a qualitative definition of the extent of congestion with "LOS A" representing minimal delay and congestion, and "LOS F" representing substantial delay and congestion. LOS is graphically described in Figure 1-8. US Highway 89 currently operates at a LOS of C or D in many locations. During peak hours when school buses would be operating in the corridor, the LOS may be D. LOS D is defined as more restricted movement, with queues and delays occurring during short peaks.

The 2020 design year LOS (with no improvements) is calculated to be LOS D. This LOS increases travel time and can increase the potential for less safe travel conditions. It also results in increasing levels of driver frustration.

1.7 Local Access/Circulation

Local access on US Highway 89 is affected by a number of factors. The Vaughn to Sun River segment of US Highway 89 serves as a collector route for commuters from the Vaughn, Simms, Fort Shaw, and Sun River communities and trips to Fairfield and Great Falls for work, shopping and various other activities. School buses serving four different schools travel between Vaughn and Simms, Monday through Friday, morning and afternoon. Local resident mailboxes are typically located immediately adjacent to the edge of pavement and require postal carriers to slow down and make frequent stops. In addition, there are currently a large number of local access turning movements for local residents entering and leaving their neighborhoods. All these different travel demands converge on this stretch of US Highway 89, making for increased congestion and driver frustration at each conflict.

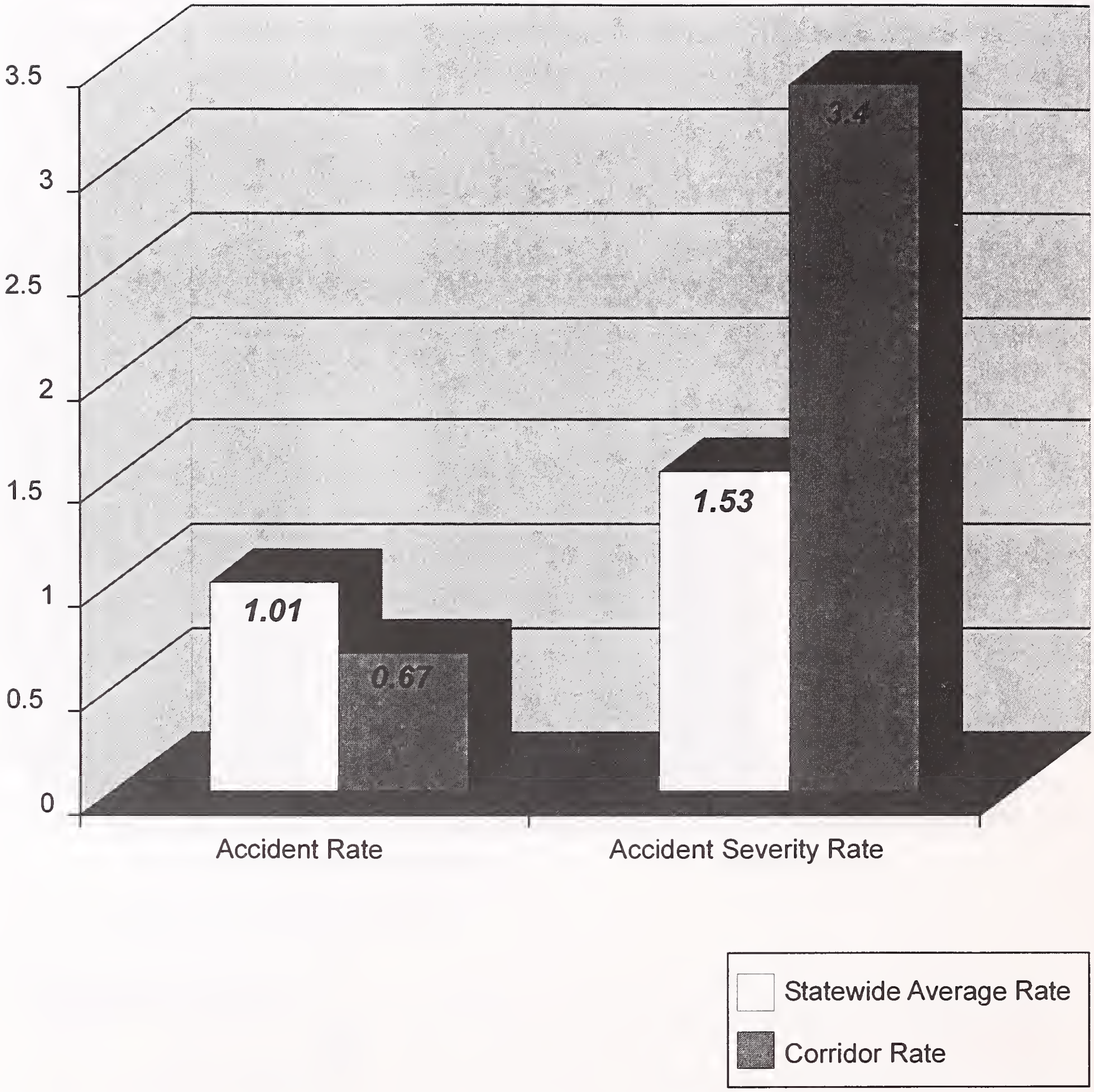
Local traffic includes school bus traffic and residential traffic using the road for access to school bus stops, mailboxes and driveways. The large number of intersection and driveway access points along US Highway 89 also degrades overall traffic service. As traffic volumes increase, conflicts between through and turning traffic increase and driver frustration also increases.



Note: Rates are calculated based on number of accidents per million vehicle miles of travel.

Figure 1-6

Corridor Accident and Severity Rates (for Autos)

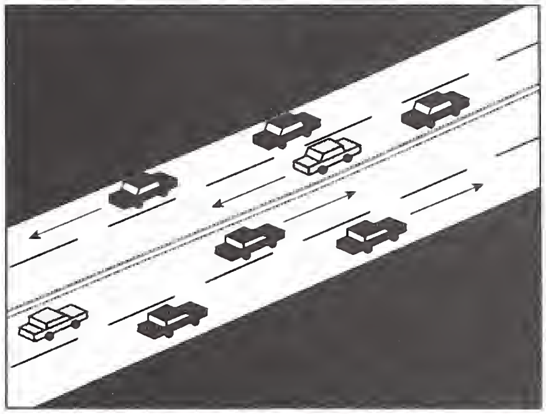


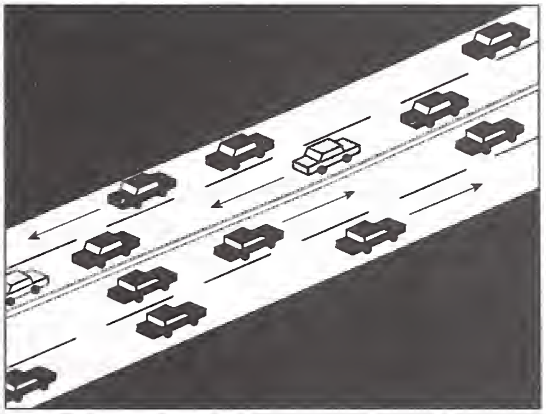
Note: Rates are calculated based on number of accidents per million vehicle miles of travel.

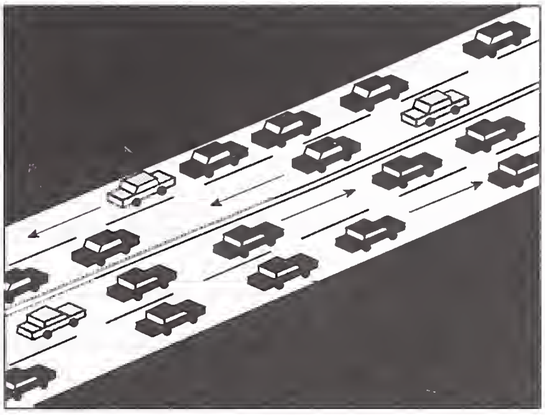
Figure 1-7

Corridor Accident and Severity Rates (for Trucks)

LOS	Roadway Segments
A	Free flow, low traffic density
B	Minimum delay, stable traffic flow
C	Stable condition, movements somewhat restricted due to higher volumes, but not objectionable for motorists
D	Movements more restricted, queues and delays may occur during short peaks, but lower demands occur often enough to permit clearing, preventing excessive backups
E	Actual capacity of the roadway involves delay to all motorists due to congestion
F	Forced flow with demand volumes greater than capacity resulting in complete congestion







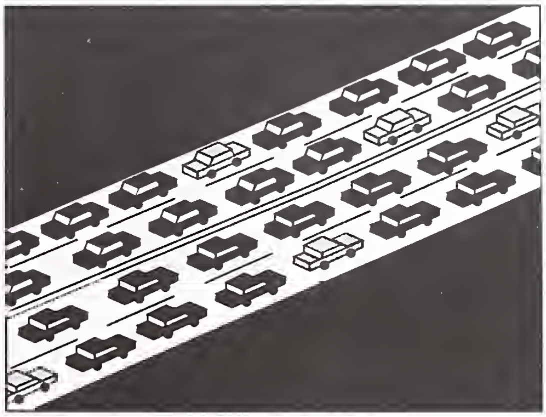


Figure 1-8

Level of Service Definitions

Instances have been reported where local traffic accessing US Highway 89 comes into conflict with legal passing situations, creating a potential accident situation.

1.8 System Continuity

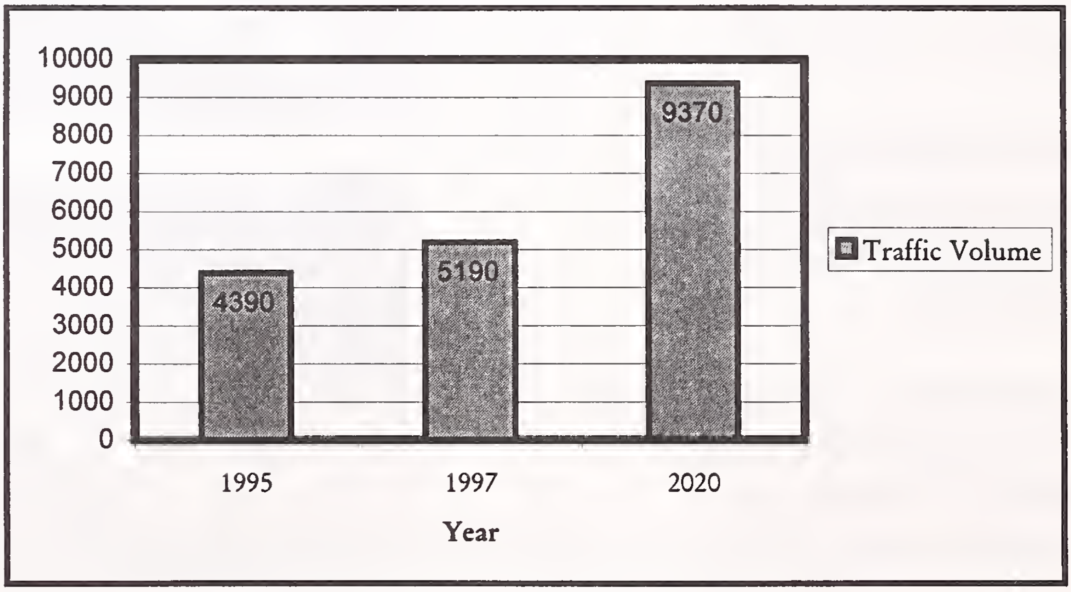
The segment of US Highway 89 that comprises the project area is a critical travel link within the regional study area (see Figure 1-1). US Highway 89 is a link for I-15 on the east near Great Falls, and with the Montana 200 junction and Town of Sun River on the west for the local, regional and commuter traffic. This is a major east/west highway that connects Great Falls to Missoula with many seasonal recreational opportunities in between. In addition, many college students and businesses with Great Falls/Missoula connections use this highway.

Interstate 15 to the east consists of four lanes of traffic. US Highway 89 and Montana 200 at the west end of the project are two-lane facilities.

1.9 Traffic Volumes and Characteristics

Records of traffic data for the project area show an historic annual growth rate of 2.6 percent. The current 1997 Average Daily Traffic (ADT) is 5190 vehicles. The 2020 design year ADT is projected at 9370, representing a 2.6 percent growth in traffic. Truck traffic comprises 34.9 percent of the vehicles counted. Table 1-1 depicts the growth in traffic volumes from 1997 to 2020.

Table 1-1
Growth in Traffic Volumes from 1997 to 2020



Source: Montana Department of Transportation

The relatively high percentage of large trucks, farming equipment and recreational vehicles contribute to the overall capacity problems on US Highway 89. Due to their large size and slow speeds, many automobile drivers consider trucks to be traffic hazards and impediments. A typical loaded truck requires more lane space (length and width), stopping distance [at least 91.4 meters (100 yards) at average highway speeds], acceleration time, and turning room than most other vehicles. Truck activity in this corridor is expected to continue at this percentage along with population and overall traffic volumes, over the next two decades.

1.10 Roadway and Bridge Deficiencies

There are a number of deficiencies with existing US Highway 89 that the Preferred Alternative intends to address. These are determined to be deficiencies when compared to MDT standards and national standards as defined in *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets*, AASHTO, 1991.

Roadway Deficiencies:

- Substandard vertical geometry (or locations where the driver cannot see over a section of rolling terrain) near the Town of Vaughn and Sand Hill.
- Substandard lane or shoulder widths in the following locations:
  - Lane widths of 2.97 m. (9.75 ft.) at Burlington Northern Railroad overpass and Muddy Creek.
  - Shoulder widths of 1.82 m. (6 ft.) for most of the project.
- Substandard horizontal geometry (or locations where the driver cannot see around a curve).
- Substandard guardrail locations at the Burlington Northern Railroad and Muddy Creek bridges.
- Inadequate clear zones, or locations where fixed objects (at actual RP 6.3 and actual RP 6.4) are adjacent to the travelling surface.
- Inadequate provisions for pedestrians and bicycles.

Bridge Deficiencies

The existing bridges at the Burlington Northern Railroad Overpass and the Muddy Creek were built in 1955. The existing structures are 9.6 meters (31.5 feet) wide. The current Sufficiency Rating for the Burlington Northern Railroad Overpass Bridge is 51.5 (designated in 1995) on a 100-point scale. The current Sufficiency Rating for the Muddy Creek Bridge is 52.5 (designated in 1996). The Sufficiency Rating is a composite of several ratings of individual bridge items that rate the structural condition and geometry of the bridge. The bridge over Muddy Creek exhibits only minor problems while the bridge inventory report for the Burlington Northern Railroad Overpass Bridge cites a number of problems associated with the structural elements. This bridge is determined to be functionally obsolete. Elements were rated from fair to satisfactory, meaning structural elements show minor section loss, cracking, spalling or scour, and other minor deterioration. Specific remarks from the bridge inventory include a poor expansion joint, loose or missing asphalt, cracked and rough wear surface, abutment settlement, and a rusty railing.

1.11 Relationship to Transportation Planning

The Vaughn to Sun River segment of US Highway 89 is designated as a Principal Arterial according to the Montana Department of Transportation Functional Classification Map, and is on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan for the Year 2000.

1.12 Economic Development

New developments in the Vaughn area such as: a gas station with an adjacent casino, a Bank, an Equestrian Center, Veterinarian Clinic and two new subdivisions, will require (from a safety standpoint) additional traffic capacity and turning movements. Existing business growth from the two gravel yards, the grocery and the vet clinic, require more traffic capacity and safer turning movements.

2.0 Alternatives Considered

Alternatives for improvements to US Highway 89 were developed and considered during the design process. This chapter states the alternatives advanced, describes the alternatives considered but not advanced, and reasons that alternatives were not advanced.

2.1 Alternatives Advanced

2.1.1 No-Action

No-Action. The No-Action Alternative would retain the existing two-lane roadway.

2.1.2 Preferred Alternative

Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative is a combination four-lane facility blending to a four-lane facility with a two-way left turn lane from the Town of Vaughn to the western project end. This alternative is shown in Figure 1-3 to Figure 1-5. This alternative improves access between adjacent neighborhoods and US Highway 89 as well as improving safety and level of service related to local traffic, regional traffic and school bus service.

The Preferred Alternative includes a 2.4-meter (7.9-foot) striped pedestrian/bicycle path (shown in Figure 1-5) adjacent to a portion of the roadway. The bike path would be located between actual RP 1.09 and actual RP 1.60, starting on the north side, crossing under US Highway 89 at actual RP 1.28 in a reinforced concrete box culvert, and travelling 506 meters (1,660 feet) on the south side.

The BNRR and Muddy Creek structures would be replaced with new four-lane concrete structures, which include a standard bridge approach and guardrails. The new three span Muddy Creek bridge, located at RP .76, would be widened from 11 meters (36 feet) to 19 meters (62 feet), and would consist of two sets of drilled caissons between abutments on either end. The total amount of riprap associated with the new Muddy Creek Bridge structure would be 471 cubic meters (16,704 cubic feet). The BNRR Bridge, located at RP .59, would be widened from 11 meters (36 feet) to 19 meters (62 feet) and would also consist of two sets of drilled caissons between abutments on either end.

Project details have been developed based on preliminary design plans and specific features may change as final design plans are developed. Design features assumed as a part of the Preferred Alternative include: pedestrian/bicycle path, school bus turnouts, new bridges over the Burlington Northern Railroad and Muddy Creek, truck and mailbox turnouts, widened shoulders, a two-way left-turn lane between actual RP .92 and actual RP 8.05, updated guardrails, improved sight distance by improving vertical alignment, and new signing and striping.

A controlled access resolution has been proposed in conjunction with the Preferred Alternative. Future access would be controlled from the beginning of the project for approximately half of the project. In an effort to eliminate vehicular conflicts caused by the multiple existing accesses, the state would control accesses in the residential area by requiring the residents to apply for permits. Access for the remainder of the project would not be controlled. Land uses in the remaining section are mostly agricultural with widely spaced accesses, thus benefits to the traffic flow along US 89 would be minimal.

2.2 Alternatives Considered But Not Advanced

The following alternatives were considered but not advanced. A general description of each of the alternatives is provided, with reasons given for its dismissal. Primary criteria used to determine whether or not an alternative should be advanced were:

- Does it meet purpose and need for which the alternatives were derived?
    - Does it resolve the conflict between local traffic and through traffic?
    - Does it allow for school busses to pull off the road for loading and unloading the children?
    - Does it resolve the roadway deficiencies that create the high number of accidents?
- Does it result in adverse environmental impacts?
- Is it economically feasible?

Alternative 1

This alternative consists of adding a two-way left turn lane (TWLTL) in the center to the existing two-lane facility (see Figure 2-1). It would improve local access between adjacent neighborhoods and US Highway 89. However, this alternative was not advanced for the following reasons:

- Would not have resolved conflict between local and through traffic. A frontage road and/or turnouts would be needed to accommodate through traffic, school busses and motorists accessing residences adjacent to US 89. Numerous homes would be impacted with the addition of a frontage road.

- Local traffic would still be required to stop for school busses. Without a barrier between travelway and shoulder, traffic from both directions would still need to stop for loading, and unloading of school buses.

- Numerous accesses perpendicular to the road would not be controlled with this alternative. Without a separate frontage road or turnouts, motorists utilizing these accesses would continue to add to the congestion and the slowing of local traffic.

- Right hand turn lanes would be needed to supplement this alternative. The right hand turn lanes would need to be provided for residents to access their home. The need for right hand turn lanes would be so frequent the roadway alignment would be very incongruent accentuating existing deficiencies. Safe and efficient travel for motorists would continue to be hampered.

- Would still not have the additional capacity required for future traffic volumes (20 year time frame). Level of service in 2020 would likely decrease to D since no additional capacity is provided for through traffic.

Overall, Alternative 1 was not advanced because it would not meet purpose and need as described in Chapter One, would not resolve the conflict between local and through traffic, would not control accesses to accommodate through traffic, would not resolve the conflict with local traffic created by school busses and lastly, it would not provide additional capacity needed for future traffic growth.

Alternative 2

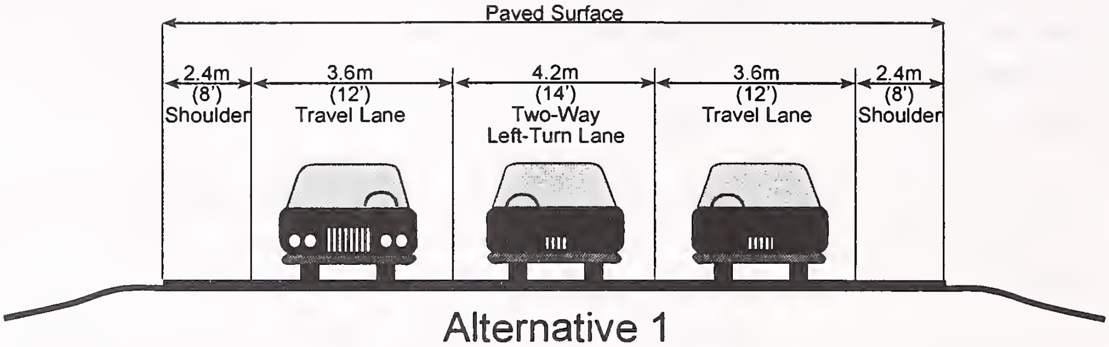
This alternative consists of a wider two-lane facility with wider shoulders (see Figure 2-1). The benefit of this alternative is primarily to provide a place for school busses to pull off the side of the road. This alternative was not advanced because it did not meet the purpose and need as described in Chapter One. As traffic volumes increase, more through lane capacity is needed to maintain an acceptable level of service.

- Conflict would remain between local traffic and through traffic due to numerous adjacent access roads. Right hand turn lanes and left hand turn lanes would be needed. The turn lanes would be placed in small increments creating an incongruent roadway accentuating existing deficiencies. Safe and efficient travel for motorists would continue to be hampered.

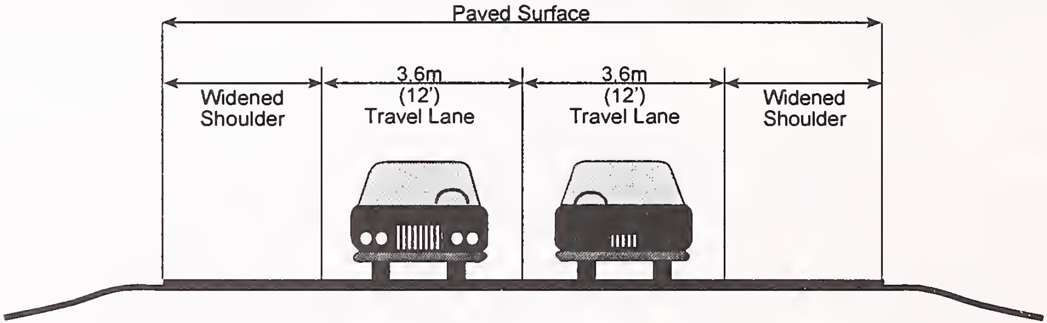
- Right-of-way required for standard full shoulder on the outside, 2.4 meters (8 feet) would be the same required for the Preferred Alternative without providing additional capacity.

- Bus turnouts or barriers adjacent to the travelway were not considered as a component to this alternative. Local traffic would still be required to stop for school busses creating a conflict between local and through traffic.

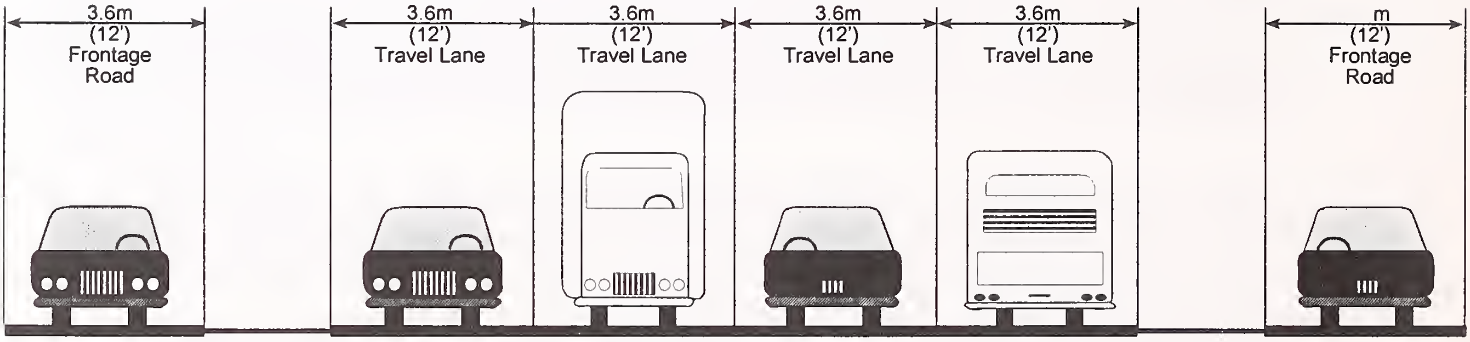
Alternative 2 was not advanced because it would not resolve the conflict between local and through traffic, or resolve existing deficiencies in the roadway created by numerous accesses. Lastly, it would require the same amount of R.O.W. required for the Preferred Alternative but would not provide additional capacity.



Alternative 1



Alternative 2



Alternative 3

Figure 2-1

Alternatives Considered But Not Advanced

Alternative 3

This alternative consists of a four-lane divided facility with frontage roads (see Figure 2-1). It would provide for controlled access between adjacent neighborhoods and US Highway 89. The frontage roads would provide the additional access links needed between local streets and school bus accesses.

- Required an enormous amount of R.O.W. acquisition (46 meters, 150 feet) resulting in greater impacts than the impacts associated with the Preferred Alternative.
- Acquisition of adjacent homes due to wider R.O.W. would result in increased project cost and community impacts.
- Bus turnouts or barriers adjacent to the travelway are not considered as a component to this alternative. Local traffic would still be required to stop for school busses creating a conflict between local and through traffic.
- The roadway would be closer to existing residences, thus creating greater potential for noise and traffic – related impacts to these neighborhoods.

Alternative 3 was not advanced because it would not resolve the conflict between local and through traffic, and this alternative would be excessively costly and result in numerous community/environmental impacts.

Bypass Alternative

A two-lane alignment north of Vaughn was considered in an effort to preserve the flow of the traffic along the existing US Highway 89. This alternative was suggested by members of the public. This alternative was not advanced for the following reasons:

- Would result in excessive environmental impacts including, but not limited to: right-of-way and relocation impacts, visual impacts, noise impacts, wildlife impacts, and community impacts.
- Would have disproportionate impacts to the existing businesses along US 89. Traffic currently utilizing the existing US 89 may re-route to the northern alignment bypassing the businesses on US 89.
- Would result in a substantial elevation to project cost due to increased construction costs associated with new right-of-way acquisition and construction of an entirely new roadbed.

Table 2-1
Alternative Evaluation

	Does it meet purpose and need?	Are environmental impacts minimized?	Is it economically feasible?	Advanced for further consideration?
No-Action Alternative	No	Yes	Yes	YES
Preferred Alternative	Yes	Yes	Yes	YES
Alternative 1	No	Yes	Yes	NO
Alternative 2	No	Yes	Yes	NO
Alternative 3	Yes	No	No	No
Bypass Alternative	Yes	No	No	No

3.0 Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation Measures

3.1 Land Use, Zoning and Land Use Planning

3.1.1 Existing Land Use

The majority of the study area is agricultural, with a number of low-density residential developments scattered throughout the corridor. At the east end of the project area, US Highway 89 runs along the border of the Vaughn business district where the land use is predominantly commercial. Within this district are two bars, the US Post Office, a bank, and a grocery store/gas station. A small number of commercial land uses appear sporadically throughout the corridor. Existing land use is shown on Figure 3-1.

3.1.2 Zoning

The study area is under the jurisdiction of Cascade County and is not currently subject to zoning.

3.1.3 Land Use Plans

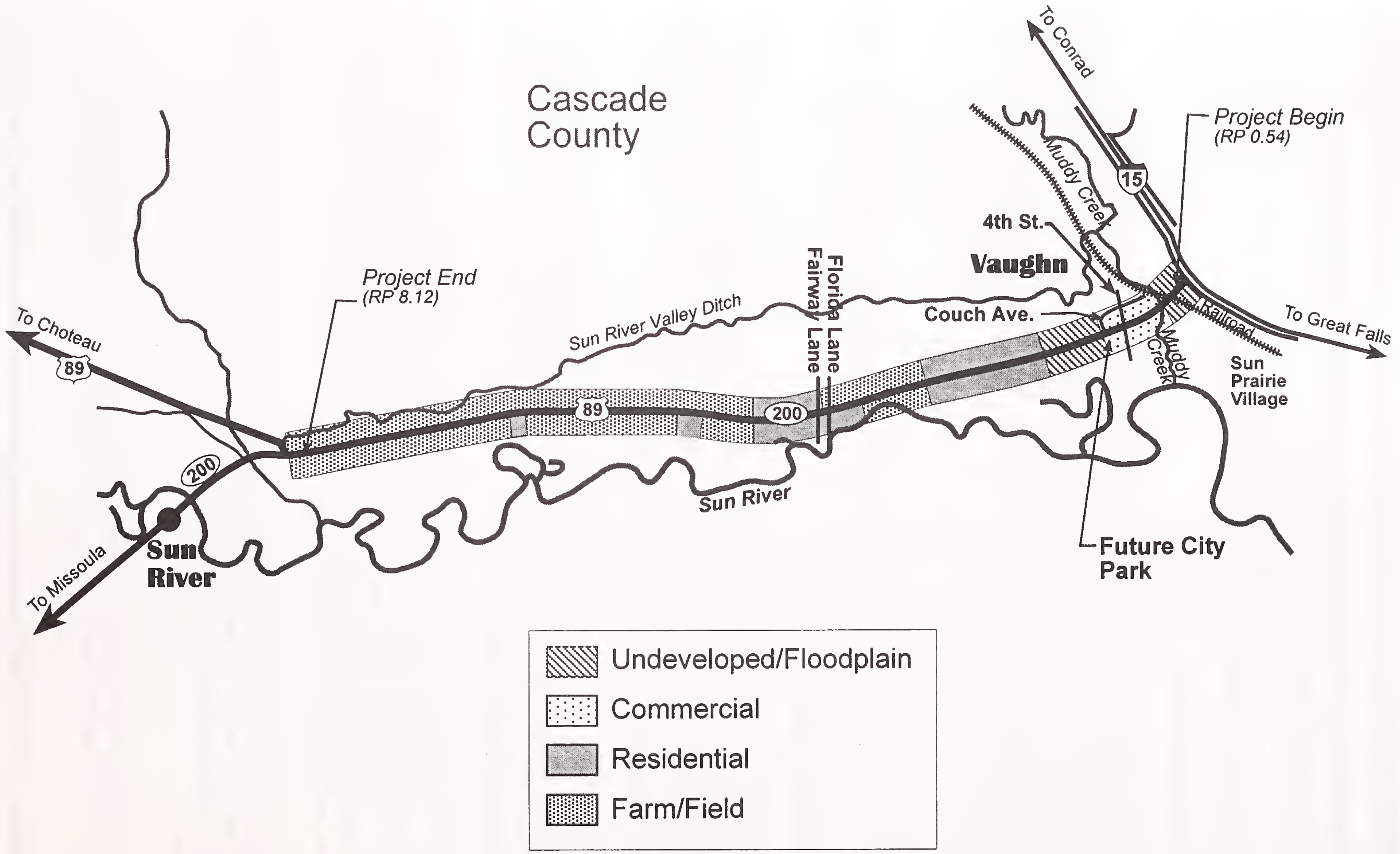
According to the 1979 *Cascade County Development Plan,* in stable rural areas, the immediate need is not to accommodate growth or to prevent development that might conflict with some future urban pattern. Rather it is to protect those areas from activities that might be detrimental to their continued use and enjoyment, to insure health and safety in such development, and to safeguard sensitive or fragile environments from development abuse.

The *Cascade County Development Plan* contains various policies intended to guide land use actions within nine planning units. The project study area includes four of the nine planning areas. These four areas are 1) Rivers, Streams, Lakes and Reservoirs, 2) Alluvial Lowlands, 3) Lowland Terraces, and 4) Benches.

The *Cascade County Development Plan* states that "Rivers, Lakes, Streams, and Reservoirs" are the highest priority landscape unit in terms of agriculture, aesthetics, wildlife habitat and recreation. Development of these water systems for domestic and agricultural uses should be subject to review by the Cascade County Soil Conservation District and should also be in compliance with Montana's Streambank Preservation Act.

The preferred use of the "Alluvial Lowland" landscape unit, according to the *Cascade County Development Plan,* would be low-density activities, such as agriculture. In addition, the subdivision of land other than for agriculture would be discouraged, and prohibited in floodplains.

The existing dominant use of the "Lowland Terraces" and "Benches" landscape units is agriculture. The *Cascade County Development Plan* states that agriculture in both of these



Note: Less than three businesses are located along US 89 west of Vaughn.

Figure 3-1
Existing Land Use

planning units should be protected, and any change or development of the land should be congruent with the natural character of the land.

3.1.4 Impacts

The No-Action Alternative would have no impact on current land uses, zoning or future land use planning in the study area.

The Preferred Alternative is consistent with the land use policies for Cascade County within the study area. The project would not have long-term impacts to Sun River or Muddy Creek, and would not change the agricultural landscape protected by the Cascade County development policies. The Preferred Alternative would benefit local residents by improving access to agricultural land, residential subdivisions, commercial development and school bus stops adjacent to the roadway.

3.2 Social

3.2.1 Existing Conditions

For the purposes of the social analysis, the project study area is fully contained within Cascade County. Data was collected on population demographics, race and ethnicity, housing, schools, and emergency services.

The Sun River Valley Planning Area accounts for the largest percentage of rural residents in Cascade County with 27.7 percent. The majority of this population is located along US Highway 89 from Vaughn to Simms. The population of Cascade County is expected to grow at one percent per year.

The Towns of Sun River and Vaughn are unincorporated, and therefore are not included as cities in the 1990 US Census. Both towns have retained their rural character in spite of burgeoning growth from the Great Falls area. Nonetheless, they are experiencing subtle changes, one of which is increasing traffic volumes.

Table 3-1
Study Area Demographics

Population Forecasts	% increase from 1990 to 2005	1990 Population	1995 Population	2000 Population	2005 Population
Sun River	Not Available*	59**	Not Available*	Not Available*	Not Available*
Vaughn	Not Available*	649**	Not Available*	Not Available*	Not Available*

Table 3-1 (continued)
Study Area Demographics

Population Forecasts	% increase from 1990 to 2005	1990 Population	1995 Population	2000 Population	2005 Population
Cascade County	2.2%	77,691	81,040	80,270	79,370
Montana	25.9%	799,065	868,748	950,000	1,006,000

Source: The Montana Department of Commerce

* The 1990 figures were calculated by The Montana Department of Commerce by totaling the Census block population figures for the areas around Sun River and Vaughn. These are only estimates.

** The Census Bureau does not provide specific information for unincorporated areas, such as Sun River and Vaughn.

According to US Census Bureau estimates released December 18, 1997, Cascade County's population was 81,087. Ninety-one percent of the total Cascade population was white, with American Indians following second, comprising 4.3 % of the total population. Roughly 82% of Cascade County's population resides in urban areas; the remaining population lives in rural areas.

There are four schools in the project area that gain access via US Highway 89. Sun River Middle School for grades sixth through eighth is located 13 kilometers (8.1 miles) southwest of Sun River, on Montana Route 200. Vaughn Elementary School (kindergarten through eighth grade) is located at 480 Central Avenue in Vaughn and is less than 1.6 kilometer (1 mile) north of US Highway 89. Two other schools in the area, are Simms High School and the other is located in Fort Shaw. Due to the lack of appropriate pull-out areas, many locations along the corridor have unsafe conditions for loading and unloading school buses.

Most emergency providers are located in Great Falls, approximately 19.3 kilometers (12 miles) from Vaughn. The closest hospitals are Benefits Health Care East and West. These hospitals are combined as one hospital in two different locations in Great Falls. The Vaughn Volunteer Fire Department is located within the Town of Vaughn.

3.2.2 Impacts

The No-Action Alternative would not alter access and would result in a continued reduction in level of service because of increasing traffic on US Highway 89. The existing rural character along the road would not change. Local access would be preserved, but as congestion increases, it would be increasingly difficult to access local properties and to provide prompt emergency services. Boarding and exiting the school bus would continue to be unsafe for children in the project area.

During construction of the Preferred Alternative, there would be short-term impacts to residents within the project area. Residents would experience increases in noise levels, traffic congestion and air pollution (dust) from construction.

The Preferred Alternative would provide safer travelling conditions and improved traffic flows through the widening of the road and the two-way left turn lanes (TWLTL). Proposed school bus turnouts (shown in Figure 1-5) would provide a space for school buses to move off of the main highway allowing for safe boarding and exiting of the school children. However, concerns have been raised by some local residents for the safety of their children crossing a five-lane highway.

The Preferred Alternative would result in positive accessibility benefits. Reduced travel times and improved mobility and safety for local residents to regional destinations would be expected to occur. Schools, emergency service providers and access to services would be enhanced because of improved access along US Highway 89. The pedestrian/bicycle path would allow for alternative modes of travel within Vaughn and allow children attending the Vaughn Elementary School to safely cross US Highway 89. Additionally, enhanced response times for emergency and service vehicles would also be expected. Accessibility factors would be expected to positively impact property values in the study area. The alignment would move closer to some residences as a result of the proposed improvements.

Implementation of the Preferred Alternative would not substantially alter the area population growth or other demographic characteristics or trends. There would be no substantial impacts to neighborhoods, communities, school, churches, ethnic and minority groups, or police or fire protection.

3.2.3 Mitigation

MDT coordinated with the school districts in the project area to thoroughly address the safety concerns associated with the children crossing a 5-lane highway. A mutual goal was reached to ensure that no child would have to cross the road to board or exit the school busses. MDT agreed to provide several smaller-scale pull-outs along the road so children could board and exit the bus without crossing the street. Representatives from the school district strategically chose the areas proposed for pull-outs. MDT has designed these pull-outs so that the bus would pull completely off of the road and a guardrail would separate the roadway from the pull-out.

3.2.4 Environmental Justice and Title VI

On February 11th, 1994, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12989 requiring federal agencies to incorporate Environmental Justice considerations into the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) planning process. The Executive Order requires that minority and low-income populations, and minority owned businesses do not receive a disproportionately high number of adverse or human health impacts as a result of Federal actions.

According to the Cascade County Planning Office and the County Assessor, there are no known populations of minority households, minority businesses, low-income households or low income businesses within the project area which would be impacted by the Preferred Alternative or the No-Action Alternative.

In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Indian reservations, tribal land outside a reservation, and minority/low income neighborhoods were identified and evaluated for impacts. The closest Indian reservation, Blackfeet Indian Reservation, is transected by US Highway 89 northwest of the project area approximately 72.4 kilometers (45 miles) northwest of Choteau. There would be no direct impacts to Blackfeet Indian Reservation as a result of the Preferred Alternative, however the improved regional mobility would benefit access to the reservation. The No-Action Alternative would have no impacts on Indian reservations, tribal land outside a reservation, or minority/low income neighborhoods within the project area.

3.3 Economic

3.3.1 Existing Conditions

The project area is fully contained within Cascade County. The largest city in Cascade County and second largest in the state is Great Falls. Agriculture, livestock and defense are the backbone of Great Falls' economy. The 1992 Census of Agriculture reports that Cascade County has 792 farms, down from the 1987 count of 805, with 38% of the farms being 400 hectares (1,000 acres) or more.

The Malmstrom Air Force Base is the most important contributor to the economic base in Cascade County. According to the State Economist, the Federal Government, which includes the Air Force Base, supports approximately 50% of the economic base. The per capita income of Cascade County was $21,051 in 1996, compared to the state per capita income of $19,278. The unemployment rate for the County decreased substantially from 7.7% in 1986 to 4.7% in 1996.

3.3.2 Impacts

The No-Action Alternative would have little immediate effect on existing economic conditions within the study area. As traffic would be expected to increase in the future, however, accessibility would continue to be hampered due to the previously identified constraints of the existing roadway. Over time this could have a negative effect on economic conditions in the study area. The alternative would also require additional maintenance costs in order to maintain the roadway in a usable condition.

The Preferred Alternative would have short-term impacts within the study area. Local travel for residents, tourists, and service vehicles would be interrupted during construction along with other general traffic throughout the project construction periods. Changes in local employment, sales, and revenues would be anticipated to be minor in the short-term during project construction.

Regional employment and sales would increase in the short-term due to the presence of the construction work force, but the overall historical growth trend would not change in the long-term.

A long-term economic effect of the Preferred Alternative that would be expected is a positive economic effect due to enhanced accessibility and improved safety.

3.4 Pedestrians and Bicyclists

3.4.1 Existing Bike and Pedestrian Conditions

Due to a lack of viable roadway shoulders, US Highway 89 does not provide a safe or otherwise optimal travel course for pedestrians or bicyclists. These elements presently discourage regular walking and bicycling along this roadway. While US Highway 89 serves a vital link in local travel and commercial transport, it also forms a community barrier to pedestrian and bicycle travel between the residential neighborhoods north and south of the roadway.

3.4.2 Bike and Pedestrian Impacts

The No-Action Alternative would prolong the inadequate conditions for non-motorized travel that presently characterize US Highway 89. As vehicular traffic continues to increase along this roadway, the non-motorized travel environment would further deteriorate along the corridor.

The Preferred Alternative would substantially enhance travel conditions and safety for pedestrians and bicyclists along US Highway 89, through the creation of a path that is separate from the highway (see Figure 1-5). The proposed trail's western beginning is at 4th Street and the trail end is at 12th Street. The total trail length would be approximately 830 meters (2739 feet). The trail would parallel the highway to the north for 330 meters (1089 feet), cross US Highway 89 through a culvert approximately 3.0 meters by 4.0 meters (10 feet by 14 feet), and continue parallel on the south side for 506 meters (1660 feet).

The Preferred Alternative would improve safety and access for children whom attend Vaughn Elementary School located at 480 Central Avenue in Vaughn. The trail would provide a safe alternative transportation corridor for the students. Currently, the public school buses make frequent stops to pick up students living on US Highway 89, augmenting the traffic congestion. The trail could help minimize this congestion when students use the trail, instead of taking the bus to school.

3.5 Right-of-Way

3.5.1 Impacts

The No-Action Alternative would require no additional right-of-way.

MDT owns part of the right-of-way required for construction of the Preferred Alternative, however acquisition of approximately 27.13 hectares (67.03 acres) of additional right-of-way by MDT would be required.

One hundred and twenty five (125) parcels have been identified that are likely to require some portion of the right-of-way to be acquired. This information is preliminary and may be refined during final design and/or when more detailed right-of-way information is available.

There would be no relocation of residences or businesses, nor would any persons be displaced as a result of the Preferred Alternative.

3.5.2 Mitigation

All right-of-way acquisition would be done in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended (1989). All owners of property to be acquired would be compensated at fair market value for their property.

3.6 Parks and Recreation

3.6.1 Existing Conditions

The project study area includes Vaughn Park, a 2.51 hectare (6.2 acre) parcel. Facilities at the park include ballfields and open space. The park is publicly owned and open year round to the public. Correspondence with the Cascade County Park Board established that Vaughn Park was purchased by the Park Board with both private donations and public funding. There were no Land and Water Conservation Funds associated with Vaughn Park, as documented in the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks' letter from Ken Soderberg in Appendix A.

Vaughn Park is a publicly owned park making it subject to Section 4(f) legislation. The "*Nationwide Section 4(f) Programmatic Evaluation for Minor Usage of Public Parks, Recreation Lands and Wildlife and Waterfowl Refuges*" is included in Appendix C.

Additional recreational opportunities in the area include Glacier National Park and Flathead National Forest. Glacier National Park is located about 206 kilometers (128 miles) north of the study area and can be accessed via US Highway 89. The National Park offers a number of recreational opportunities, including hiking, camping, and wildlife viewing.

The Flathead National Forest is also located near the study area, approximately 80.5 kilometers (50 miles) west, and can be accessed by State Route 21. The National Forest offers a diversity of recreational opportunities, including hiking, camping and hunting.

3.6.2 Impacts

The No-Action alternative would have no direct effect on recreational resources in the study area. However, as congestion increases, access to these resources would become increasingly difficult.

The Preferred Alternative would result in approximately 4.5 meters (15 feet) of right-of-way encroachment to the existing Vaughn Park, an impact of approximately 2.3% to the total park area. This impact was documented in a "*Nationwide Section 4(f) Programmatic Evaluation for Minor Usage of Public Parks, Recreation Lands, and Wildlife and Waterfowl Refuges*" and in the impact concurrence letter sent to the Cascade County Park Board, signed May 20, 1999 (both are included in Appendix C). Further discussion of Vaughn Park impacts is included in Chapter 4, Section 4(f) Evaluation.

Additionally, the Preferred Alternative would improve access and safety conditions to recreational areas, such as Glacier National Park, Lewis and Clark National Forest, Helena National Forest and Flathead National Forest, by improving regional mobility.

3.6.3 Mitigation

The Preferred Alternative would benefit Vaughn Park by providing pedestrian and bicyclist traffic safer access to the park via the proposed bicycle path from actual RP 1.09 to actual RP 1.60. The bicycle path would cross under Highway 89 in a culvert at RP 1.28, just west of the Vaughn Park, allowing children to safely cross the highway. Further discussion of Vaughn Park mitigation is included in Chapter 4, Section 4(f) Evaluation.

Mitigation to the park would also include filling and recontouring the existing ditch at the edge of the park, leaving the area in a more useable condition as well as improving the views from the baseball fields.

3.7 Air Quality

3.7.1 Existing Conditions

The US Highway 89 study area is located in an "unclassifiable" attainment area of Montana for air quality under 40 CFR 81.327, as amended. As such, this proposed project is not covered under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Final Rule of November 24, 1993 on Air Quality conformity. Therefore, this proposed project complies with Section 176(c) of the *Clean Air Act* as amended (42 U.S.C. 7521(a)). The closest non-attainment area is in the Great Falls metropolitan area.

The air quality impacts of the No-Action Alternative would be minimal in the short-term because there would be no increased emissions as a result of construction activities. Over the longer-term, however, as congestion increases, there would be localized increases in carbon monoxide.

The Preferred Alternative would result in short-term increases in air pollution from construction-related traffic and increases in particulate emissions from ground disturbances. Over time, air emissions associated with traffic congestion would decrease, as congestion associated with turning traffic or slower moving traffic decreases. This would occur as a result of the planned improvements to alignment, addition of passing lanes, inclusion of acceleration and deceleration lanes and inclusion of turning lanes.

The transportation conformity regulations of November 1993 do not apply to this project.

Particulate or dust emissions would be minimized during construction by implementation of techniques to control dust, such as regular watering of construction disturbed areas.

3.8 Noise

3.8.1 Existing Conditions

A noise analysis for the Sun River to Vaughn project was originally performed in the fall of 1991, with a supplemental noise analysis reflecting up-to-date average daily traffic projections being completed in the fall of 1998.

Land uses along the project corridor are residential, agricultural and commercial. Residential land uses are categorized by the Federal Highway Administration as Category B, which means that abatement should be considered if noise levels approach 67 dBA Leq. Leq refers to the equivalent sound level, which, if held constant over the specified period of time, would yield the same amount of energy as the actual fluctuating noise. See Table 3-2 for the FHWA Noise Abatement Criteria.

Table 3-2
FHWA Noise Abatement Criteria for Considering Traffic Noise Impacts

Noise Abatement Criteria (NAC)		
Activity Category	Leq(h) dBA	Description of Activity Category
A	57 Exterior	Lands on which serenity and quiet are of extraordinary significance and where the preservation of those qualities is essential if the area is to continue to serve its intended purpose.
B	67 Exterior	Picnic areas, recreation areas, playgrounds, active sports areas, parks, residences, motels, hotels, schools, churches, libraries, and hospitals.

Table 3-2 (cont'd.)
FHWA Noise Abatement Criteria for Considering Traffic Noise Impacts

Noise Abatement Criteria (NAC)		
Activity Category	Leq(h) dBA	Description of Activity Category
C	72 Exterior	Developed lands, properties, or activities not included in Categories A or B above.
D	________	Undeveloped lands.
E	52 Interior	Residences, motels, hotels, public meeting rooms, schools, churches, libraries, hospitals, and auditoriums.

The model used for this supplemental noise analysis is Stamina 2.0. As shown in Table 3-3, existing ambient noise measurements were taken at 34 locations along the study corridor.

Table 3-3
Calculated Existing and Future Noise levels in the dBA Leq

Receiver	Type of Land Use	Distance from Centerline	Present Year (1997) No-Build	Design Year (2020) No-Build	Present Year (1997) Build	Design Year (2020) Build	Impact
1	Residential	38 m L	61	64	63	65	
2	Residential	42 m R	62	65	62	65	
3	Residential	76 m L	57	64	58	61	
4	Residential	57 m L	59	62	58	62	
6	Residential	60 m R	60	62	58	62	
5a	Residential	41 m L	61	64	62	65	
6	Residential	47 m R	60	63	61	63	
7	Residential	45 m L	61	63	61	60	
8	Residential	59 m L	60	63	60	63	
9	Residential	52 m R	60	62	60	63	
10	Residential	51 m R	60	63	61	63	
11	Residential	56 m R	59	62	60	63	
12	Residential	71 m R	58	61	59	61	
13	Residential	50 m L	61	63	61	63	
15	Residential	68 m L	63	65	62	65	
16	Residential	44 m L	63	65	62	65	
17	Residential	59 m L	63	66	63	66	yes
19	Residential	55 m L	63	66	64	66	yes
20	Residential	61 m L	63	65	63	66	yes
21	Residential	68 m L	62	64	62	65	
22	Residential	61 m L	63	66	63	66	yes
23	Residential	58 m R	63	66	63	65	yes
24	Residential	57 m L	63	66	64	64	yes
25	Residential	69 m R	62	64	62	64	
26	Residential	57 m L	63	66	64	66	yes
27	Residential	78 m R	61	64	61	64	

Table 3-3 (cont'd.)
Calculated Existing and Future Noise levels in the dBA Leq

Receiver	Type of Land Use	Distance from Centerline	Present Year (1997) No-Build	Design Year (2020) No-Build	Present Year (1997) Build	Design Year (2020) Build	Impact
28	Residential	80 m L	61	64	61	64	
28	Residential	75 m R	61	64	61	64	
30	Residential	74 m R	61	64	61	64	
31	Residential	58 m L	63	66	63	66	yes
35	Residential	60 m L	63	65	63	65	
37	Residential	86 m R	60	63	60	63	
39	Residential	63 m L	62	65	62	65	

3.8.2 Impacts

Table 3-3 indicates that noise impacts occur at eight of the modeled receivers, according to the MDT definition of noise impact. However, only one of the receivers is modeled as experiencing a noise impact as a result of the project. All of the other noise increases and noise impacts are a result of the increase in traffic between 1997 and 2020.

Most of the impacted receivers are located in a small subdivision midway in the project corridor.

The criteria for determining noise impacts are:

- Comparison of predicted noise levels with FHWA NAC. Any predicted noise level which approaches the NAC. MDT has defined the term "approach" to mean 1 Leq less than FHWA NAC.

- Determination of whether a substantial increase would occur from existing to predicted noise levels. MDT has defined a substantial increase as one of 10 dBA Leq or greater.

No-Action

Noise levels are projected to increase as a result of the No-Action Alternative because of the projected increase in traffic volumes. Increases generally would be two to three decibels.

Preferred Alternative

Most of the modeled receivers in the corridor although below the noise abatement criteria (67 leq) are already high. Six of the properties approach noise abatement criteria. Noise levels at two of the receivers are modeled as decreasing slightly with the design year build scenario. Overall the project noise levels increase 4 decibels or less, a change that would be imperceptible over a long period of time (present year to design year).

3.8.3 Mitigation

When noise impacts occur, the Montana Department of Transportation is required to examine possible mitigation measures for the abatement of highway traffic noise. In many states noise barriers or berms are typically constructed to reduce highway traffic noise for high density housing along highways and/or interstates. In Montana however, such mitigation is rarely reasonable due to the low-density housing and unlimited access facilities. The project corridor is also an unlimited access facility, which precludes the use of noise barriers or berms.

Mitigation measures that may be considered are listed below :

1. Traffic management measures

   a. Reduce speed limits in the project corridor. Lower speed limits result in lower noise levels. A posted speed limit of 55mph (88 km/h) may reduce speed limits up to three decibels in some locations. A posted speed limit on a four-lane facility in this area would be very difficult to enforce, however.

   b. Restrict use of certain vehicle types, such as heavy trucks, or restrict times that vehicles can travel the corridor.

Because this route serves as a major route for the State of Montana, and there are no alternate routes, these traffic measures are not feasible.

1. Changes to vertical or horizontal alignment

   a. A shift in the alignment can move the source of noise away from the receivers thus reducing the noise impacts. For this project however the only alignment option is the present corridor, which is limited by horizontal constraints.

   b. A change to the vertical alignment, whereby the facility is raised or lowered to reduce noise impacts, is not a feasible option either due to the extensive costs required. Additional costs would be required to redesign the alignment, retain the existing accesses and for construction.

Although noise impacts are identified for the design year on this project, there are no reasonable and feasible solutions for mitigating them at present. Noise levels would not increase more than four decibels for any of the receivers along the project corridor.

3.9 Water Resources/Quality

3.9.1 Existing Conditions

The study area falls within the Sun River Watershed, which is located east of the continental divide and south of Glacier National Park. The watershed covers 5,720 square kilometers (2,200 square miles), with approximately 91,238 hectares (228,096 acres) in northwest Cascade County.

There are three major water features located within the project study area. The Sun River runs parallel to US Highway 89, on the south side of the project corridor and Sun River Valley Ditch runs parallel to US Highway 89 on the north side. The Sun River's seasonal flows are highly influenced by irrigation projects in the area. Muddy Creek intersects US Highway 89 near Vaughn. Two small drainage ditches cross US Highway 89 between Sun River and Vaughn. These water features can be seen in Figure 3-2.

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) has monitored the water quality of waterways within the Sun River Basin including the Sun River and Muddy Creek. MDEQ has designated the segment of Sun River from the headwaters to Muddy Creek as a Class B-1, partially supported waterway. This class of water is suitable for drinking, culinary and food processing purposes, after conventional treatment; bathing, swimming and recreation; growth and propagation of salmon fishes and associated aquatic life, waterfowl and furbearers; and agricultural and industrial water supply.

The portion of the Sun River from Muddy Creek towards Great Falls is designated a Class B-3 waterway. A Class B-3 waterway is suitable for drinking, culinary and food processing purposes, after conventional treatment; bathing, swimming and recreation; growth and propagation of non-salmonid fishes and associated aquatic life, waterfowl and furbearers; and agricultural and industrial water supply. This segment partially supports drinking water supply and agriculture. This segment does not support the waterway for swimming, warm water fisheries, aquatic life support, or recreation.

Muddy Creek is designated as a Class-I waterway. This class of waterway fully supports the following uses: drinking, culinary, and food processing purposes after conventional treatment; bathing, swimming, and recreation; growth and propagation of fishes and associated aquatic life, waterfowl, and furbearers; and agricultural and industrial water supply. Waterways in this classification would be analyzed and specific standards would be adjusted to reflect the changes occurring in the water quality. Currently, Muddy Creek partially supports the drinking water supply and agriculture. Non-supported uses include swimming, cold water trout fishery, and aquatic life support.

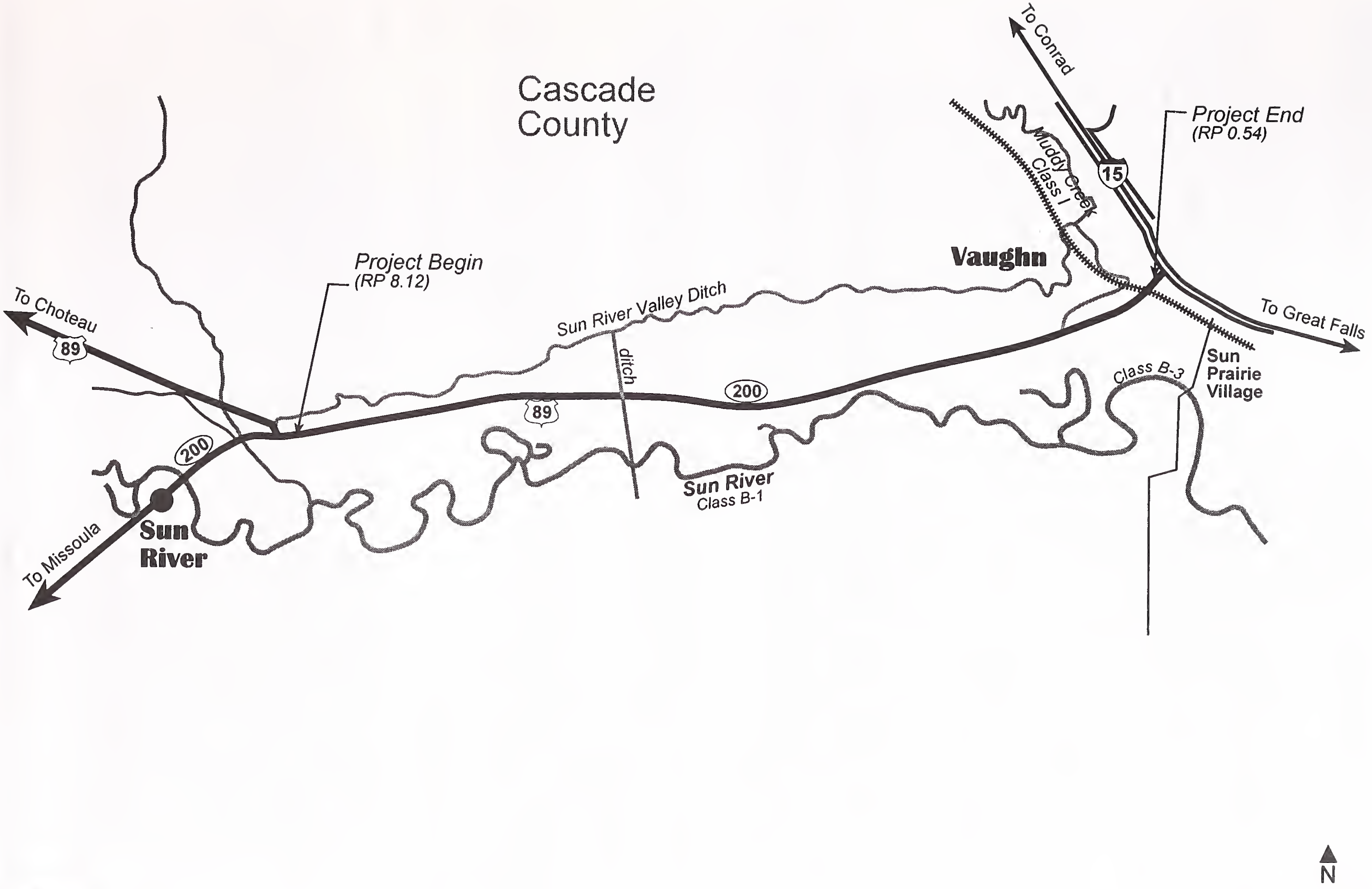


Figure 3-2

Water Resources

3.9.2 Impacts

The No-Action Alternative would have no short-term impact on existing water quality conditions and would result in less surface runoff since there is less paved surface area on the existing road. Long-term impacts to water quality would occur with the No-Action Alternative, as increases in traffic volume would eventually result in increased run-off contaminants, when compared to existing conditions.

A short-term impact of the Preferred Alternative could be increased sediment during construction of the Preferred Alternative. During construction at specific locations, there could be an increase in sediment loading into streams. A short-term change in the rate of erosion from land surfaces could occur due to removal of vegetation, but impacts of this would occur only in the event of a large rainstorm or snowmelt.

The Preferred Alternative would result in greater amounts of impervious (paved) roadway surface area that would increase the volume of storm run-off. Highway water run-off is characterized by heavy metals, nutrients, sediments, oil, grease, deicing salts, and litter pollutants. These pollutants could adversely impact water quality on roadways where the ADT is over 30,000. Anticipated ADT on US Highway 89 for the year 2020 is less than 10,000, which is well under 30,000, so the concentrations in the study area would not be expected to adversely affect water quality.

The improved safety associated with the Preferred Alternative would decrease the likelihood of hazardous materials spills that decrease water quality and adversely impact fishery resources.

3.9.3 Mitigation

Throughout the construction phase, acceptable state of the art mitigation measures as described in the *MDT Highway Construction Control Work Plan* would be used. Some of these acceptable mitigation measures include:

Long Term Mitigation

- An Erosion Control Plan would be submitted to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ's) Water Quality Division in compliance with their Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Regulations (ARM 16.20.1314) for the proposed project. Best Management practices would be included in the design of this plan using the guidelines as established in MDT's Highway Construction Erosion Control Work Plan. The objective is to minimize erosion of disturbed areas during and following construction of the proposed project.

- Use of vegetated drainage swales to slow stormwater runoff and allow for the settling of suspended solids and contaminants before discharging to surface waters.

- In accordance with 7-22-2152, and 60-2-208 M.C.A., MDT would reestablish a permanent desirable vegetation community along all areas disturbed by the proposed construction. A set of revegetation guidelines would be developed by MDT that must be followed by the contractor. These specifications would include instructions on seeding methods, seeding dates, types and amounts of mulch and fertilizer, along with the seed mix components. Seed mixes include a variety of species to assure that the areas disturbed by construction are immediately stabilized by vegetative cover. The Seeding Special Provisions developed for this proposed project would be forwarded to the Cascade County Weed Board for approval.

Short Term / Construction Mitigation

- Implement erosion control measures, such as temporary and permanent seeding and mulching, within a reasonable time following disruption of the soil.

- Implement sedimentation control methods, such as check dams, silt fences, and sedimentation basins along drainage routes and adjacent to water features.

- Use temporary and permanent retention ponds to optimize settling time for the sediment-laden run-off before entering a water feature.

- Use settling ponds for the effluent of the dewatering operations.

- Minimize vegetation disturbance and rapidly revegetate areas of disturbance.

- Restrict movements of construction vehicles on unpaved areas where possible.

3.10 Wetlands/Vegetation

3.10.1 Existing Conditions

Wetlands

A field survey and wetland delineation were conducted in August 1998 by an MDT consultant, in accordance with the *US Army Corp of Engineers (COE) 1987 Wetland Delineation Manual* and Executive Order 11990.

An estimated 1.9 hectares (4.7 acres) of wetlands occur within the project corridor (see Figure 3-3). Wetlands within the corridor can be divided into the following three groups:

- *Deciduous riparian floodplain wetlands.* These wetlands have developed within overflow plains and meanders of Muddy Creek and Sun River, as a result of high water events. They appear to remain dependent upon periodic high water from the local groundwater table.

- *Fringe wetlands associated with ordinary high water marks.* This type primarily consists of a 2-meter (6-foot) fringe of reed canary grass that dominates each bank of Muddy Creek; lesser amounts of meadow foxtail also occur. A small mid-channel island vegetated in streambank willow and reed canary grass is also present.

- *Wetland-associated ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices.* These areas include wetlands within roadside borrow depressions and irrigation systems. Common wetland plants within this description generally include (by dominance): reed canary grass; meadow foxtail; Baltic rush; water and Nebraska sedges; curly dock; field horsetail and foxtail barley; Olney three-square and small-fruited bulrushes; and occasional inclusions of watercress, water speedwell, northern arrowhead, alkali cordgrass, tall mannagrass, and creeping spikerush.

Exceptions appear within the wetter areas where such tall emergents as broad-leaved cattail, and both soft-stem and hard-stem bulrushes occur.

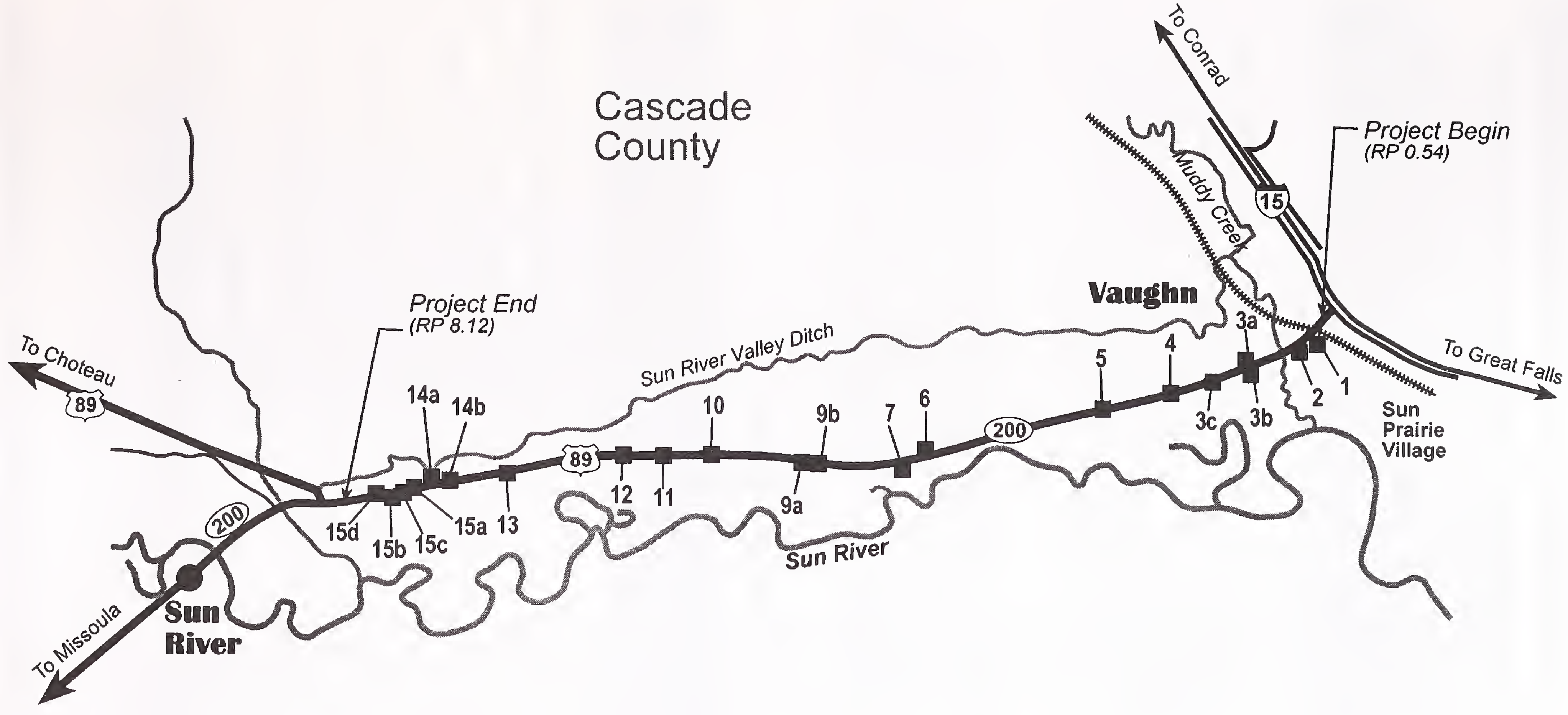
All wetlands, except those associated with the riparian floodplain, are of a herbaceous, emergent nature and have marginal worth as ditch-related sites. Size also limits virtually all project wetlands that range from a minimum 0.003 ha. (0.007 ac) to 0.40 ha (1.0 ac). This limited size and the common lack of other cover components such as shrubby areas or open water affects diversity. Of the twenty-one wetland locations (including seven sub-sites) nineteen are irrigation-induced. Of these nineteen, seventeen fall within the lower Category IV rating. See Table 3-4 below for wetland sizes and categories.

Most of these sites could be considered low-value wetlands. An exception to this comes in the function of production export/food chain support, as densely vegetated ditches are of use to many organisms. This occurs only for a few months of each growing season. Some moderate value can also be assigned for their role in sediment stabilization. More functional wetlands are those connected to riparian corridors which generally provide better wildlife habitat, and threatened and/or endangered species habitat.

Vegetation

The majority of US Highway 89's alignment between Sun River and Vaughn traverses what were once native grasslands of Montana's northern plain. The area now largely produces grain, alfalfa, and cattle under an extensive irrigation network managed by the Sun River Ditch Company.

Riparian communities adjacent to the Sun River floodplain south of the alignment, and protective shrubs and trees planted by rural inhabitants have helped to offset earlier riparian losses. These same communities act as some of the area's more functional and aesthetic deciduous habitats.



■ Location of wetlands

*Refer to Table 3-4 for a description of wetlands and wetland impacts.

Figure 3-3
Wetland Locations

Species occupying these more functional sites, include: black cottonwood trees- and the less common eastern plains cottonwood; silver buffalo berry; hawthorn; Russian olive; western snowberry; wild rose; Canada bunch- berry; and American licorice. The more water tolerant species identified are: streambank, yellow, and peach-leaved willows; red-osier dogwoods; several bulrush species; other such emergents as broad-leaved cattail, creeping spikerush, northern arrowhead, and Nebraska, beaked, and water sedges; and several other forbs and grasses such as common field mint, curly dock, tall mannagrass, and alkali cordgrass.

Plant composition within the current ROW and well into the proposed construction limits has a dominance of many introduced grasses and weeds. This condition has been created by construction and agricultural-related activities within and adjacent to the highway's existing borrow areas. Less noxious species include: reed canary grass; smooth brome and common cheatgrass; crested, tall, and intermediate wheatgrasses; both white and yellow sweet clover; great basin wild rye; orchard grass; and an assortment of coarser forbs and noxious weeds to be discussed.

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) database prior to the field survey revealed no known occurrences of Rare and Sensitive Vegetation Species of Concern within an 8-kilometer (5-mile) radius encompassing the entire project length. Virtually no native habitats remain today along the construction corridor. Particular attention was given to roadside wetlands still harboring native species, yet no sensitive plants were observed during the August site visit.

Table 3-4
Wetlands Summary

Wetland Site No.	Wetland Category	Estimated Wetland Size/ Hectares (Acres)	Estimated Wetland Impact/ Hectares (Acres)	Type of Wetland
1	IV	0.206 (0.509)	0.040 (0.099)	Component of deciduous riparian floodplain
2	III	0.060 (0.148)	0.024 (0.059)	Fringe wetlands associated with bank high water mark
3a	IV	0.009 (0.022)	0.009 (0.022)	Wetland-associated ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices
3b	IV	0.005 (0.012)	0.005 (0.012)	Wetland-associated ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices
3c	IV	0.014 (0.035)	0.014 (0.035)	Wetland-associated ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices
4	III	0.152 (0.376)	0.086 (0.213)	Wetland-associated ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices
5	IV	0.003 (0.007)	0.003 (0.007)	Wetland-associated ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices

Table 3-4 (cont'd.)
Wetlands Summary

Wetland Site No.	Wetland Category	Estimated Wetland Size/ Hectares (Acres)	Estimated Wetland Impact/ Hectares (Acres)	Type of Wetland
6	IV	0.053 (0.131)	0.041 (0.101)	Wetland-associated ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices
7	III	0.275 (0.680)	None	Component of deciduous riparian floodplain
9a	IV	0.405 (1.001)	0.154 (0.381)	Wetland-associated ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices
9b	IV	0.016 (0.040)	0.006 (0.015)	Wetland-associated ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices
10	IV	0.015 (0.037)	0.011 (0.027)	Wetland-associated ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices
11	IV	0.010 (0.025)	0.005 (0.012)	Wetland-associated ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices
12	IV	0.184 (0.455)	0.162 (0.400)	Wetland-associated ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices
13	III	0.021 (0.052)	0.004 (0.010)	Wetland-associated ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices
14a	IV	0.032 (0.079)	0.032 (0.079)	Wetland-associated ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices
14b	IV	0.038 (0.094)	0.038 (0.094)	Wetland-associated ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices
15a	IV	0.103 (0.255)	0.103 (0.255)	Wetland-associated ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices
15b	IV	0.208 (0.514)	0.153 (0.378)	Wetland-associated ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices
15c	IV	0.027 (0.067)	0.022 (0.054)	Wetland-associated ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices
15d	IV	0.054 (0.133)	0.043 (0.106)	Wetland-associated ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices
TOTAL		**1.890 (4.672)**	**0.955 (2.359)**	

**Site 8 was evaluated and determined to be a NON-wetland area based on soils criteria.

3.10.2 Impacts

The No-Action Alternative would result in no impacts to wetlands or other vegetation.

The Preferred Alternative is estimated to permanently impact 0.95 ha. (2.2 ac.) of wetlands, unavoidably, with proposed widening associated with the project. No impacts are associated with wetland site #7. Of the total estimated impacts, approximately ninety-six percent of these wetlands are associated with ditches and depressions resulting from local irrigation practices. It should also be considered that MDT's intent to retain the irrigation systems would, in time, partially offset direct impacts as wetland characteristics re-establish within newly relocated ditches. See Table 3-4 above for estimated wetland impacts, and Table 3-5 for estimated wetland impacts by classification.

Additional temporary and indirect impacts may also occur during construction to threaten downstream environments when affecting the various irrigation networks adjacent to the project. Indirect impacts may be avoided under the guidance of MDT's best management practices.

Table 3-5
Wetland Impacts by Classifications

MDT Overall Wetland Rating	Impacted Area/ ha (ac)
Class I	No Class I Wetlands
Class II	No Class II Wetlands
Class III	0.114 (0.282)
Class IV	0.841 (2.077)
Total	**0.955 (2.359)**

Given effective weed management, the Preferred Alternative should have little impact on the adjacent plant communities within roadside borrow areas. The acquisition of new ROW, however, would encroach slightly upon portions of crop and pastureland throughout the project's length. No impacts would occur within the Sun River floodplain, or any of substance near RP 3.8 where the wider alignment would interface with a remnant river oxbow.

3.10.3 Practicable Alternatives

Wetlands #3-6, 9-15: These wetlands are associated with roadway drainage and the irrigation ditches running parallel to the roadway. Some of these may be determined to be non-jurisdictional wetlands by the US Army Corps of Engineers, since these are dependent on roadway runoff or the irrigation practices of adjacent property owners.

All Wetlands: The No-Action Alternative would avoid fill in the wetlands, however, the No-Action alternative does not meet purpose and need for the project.

Another alternative to avoid wetlands would be to bridge over the wetlands. Bridging is not considered a practicable alternative due to its greater cost (approximately three times the cost of a section of fill) and its greater safety hazards due to icing in the winter.

In areas where wetlands would be longitudinally encroached, the construction of retaining walls to reduce the impact of fill was considered. This alternative would however increase the cost of construction as well require the installation of guard-rails to protect errant vehicles from sliding over a dangerous vertical edge. The construction of steep drop-off areas immediately adjacent to the roadway is contrary to the purpose and need for this project. For these reasons the construction of retaining walls is not considered a practicable mitigation measure.

Shifting the alignment to avoid or minimize impacts to wetlands was also considered. However shifting the alignment would result in increased impacts to residential area and would not meet purpose and need for the project.

Due to the location of the ditch-related wetlands and bridge replacements, it is not possible to entirely avoid wetland impacts. The design of the Preferred Alternative, however would include all feasible measures to minimize wetland impacts.

3.10.4 Mitigation

The Preferred Alternative has been designed to avoid if possible, then to minimize disturbance and impacts to identified wetlands. However, since some wetlands are immediately adjacent to the existing roadway, complete avoidance is not possible.

Where wetland losses are unavoidable, wetland losses would be minimized by implementing conservation measures in roadway design and construction. Specific mitigation during construction that would be considered includes:

- Minimize vegetation removal.
- Revegetate all exposed areas to MDT standards to reduce erosion and sedimentation.
- Revegetate areas with desirable ground covers to inhibit invasion of noxious weeds and for aesthetic purposes.
- Coordinate weed control, seeding and fertilization with the Cascade County Weed Control Authority and MDT.
- Flag or fence wetland areas during construction to avoid unnecessary disturbance due to construction activities.
- Provide bank stabilization and erosion control to meet standards defined by the MDT Highway Construction Standard Erosion Control Plan.

- Contractor adherence to MDT's best management practices (BMPs) relating to water quality and the handling of fuels and other contaminants common to staging areas.

Based on the Army Corps of Engineers forthcoming determination of which project wetlands are in fact jurisdictional, MDT is anticipating the need for suitable mitigation. MDT is actively pursuing mitigation sites within the northern portion of the Missouri/Sun/Smith Watershed (Watershed #7) which is within close proximity to the project.

Permits for placing fill in wetlands must be obtained from the US Army Corps of Engineers under Section 404 of the Federal Clean Water Act, as amended.

Based upon the above considerations, it is determined that there is no practicable alternative to the proposed construction in wetlands and that the proposed action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands which may result from such use.

3.11 Wildlife/Threatened and Endangered Species

Information pertaining to endangered, threatened, sensitive and rare wildlife, fish, herptiles and vegetative species was sought from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP), and MDT's District Biologist. A literature review was also conducted and the Montana Rivers Information System (MRIS, 1997) queried to gather aquatic resource data for that reach of Muddy Creek bisected by the project. During a field reconnaissance, particular attention was paid to signs of tracks, scat, and nest structures within and near the ROW. Personal interviews were also held in August, 1998 with area MDT field maintenance personnel regarding highway wildlife mortality.

3.11.1 Existing Conditions

Wildlife

The MNHP file search for Rare and Sensitive Species of Concern did not reveal any recorded elemental occurrences for sensitive wildlife species. It is concluded from the lack of physical observations or location of suitable habitats that the high level of prior disturbance within the project corridor has largely displaced potential species.

The Sun River to Vaughn area today finds most of its remaining wildlife utilizing the Sun River floodplain. Wildlife tends to congregate more frequently along the Sun River riparian corridor than within the project's drier, more manipulated grassland and agrarian areas.

Many of the species occurring here are the same found throughout much of the northern plain. These typically include such user groups as: small, rodent-like mammals; small fur bearers such as muskrat, raccoon, river beaver, and the occasional mink and bobcat; a large number of birds;

deer and pronghorn antelope populations both within or near the floodplain as well as outlying areas; and a number of herptiles.

Probably most obvious to passing motorists are the white-tailed deer visible along the highway corridor which has created a vehicle-mortality issue to be considered.

Also seasonally visible are a large variety of birds with over 120 species compiled by the Montana Bird Distribution Committee between 1991-1995.

Threatened and/or Endangered Species

Of the 13 species in Montana presently classified by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service as either threatened or endangered, only three are known or suspected to occur within Cascade County. These include: the threatened bald eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus), the endangered peregrine falcon (Falco peregrinus) and the endangered gray wolf (Canis lupus).

Under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (as amended, 1988), the term "endangered species" is defined as a species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range; and a "threatened species" are likely to become endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their range. Migratory birds, including raptors, are protected.

One former species not considered is that of (threatened) grizzly bears (Ursus arctos horribilis) which freely roamed this portion of northern plain into the early 19th century. Grizzly bears are no longer suspected to occur within Cascade County.
Those individuals proposed for listing in Montana at this time include the Canada lynx (Lynx canadensis) and the St. Mary-Belly River population of bull trout (Salvelinus confluentus), neither of which would be affected by the Preferred Alternative.

- *Bald Eagle* - Bald eagles retain a migrant status on this lower segment of the Sun River along with a minor wintering presence. A search by MNHP and review of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MDFWP's) 1997 listing of bald eagle nesting territories of record indicate no active locations within many miles of the project, the nearest occurring well to the west within the upper Sun River floodplain (Taylor, pers. comm.). It is possible with an increasing bald eagle population that a pair may choose at a future time to repeatedly forage or begin nesting activity along a portion of the Sun River nearer this project. However, at this time their presence within the immediate project area is considered infrequent and less than significant.

- *Peregrine Falcon* - Peregrine falcons may forever retain a migrant status along this portion of the Sun River corridor due to the general absence of suitable habitats. Foraging areas utilized by these transient individuals primarily include wetlands that attract lesser prey (bird) species through their diversity of habitats. Considering that virtually all project-related wetlands afford neither this diversity nor a functional size, it is improbable that migrating falcons, briefly within this highly active travel corridor, seek them out. A query of various agency biologists produced no knowledge of peregrine falcon use within the project area nor concern for the proposed action as relates to this species.

- *Gray Wolf* - Once successful in hunting and scavenging among the remains of Plains ungulates, the recorded presence of gray wolf today in the general area depends upon infrequent sightings only. Recent implementation of the Yellowstone Wolf Reintroduction Program and other similar USFWS efforts may possibly elevate area sightings of such transient wolves trading again between historic ranges. However, it remains extremely unlikely that this reclusive species would ever reoccupy this developing lower portion of the Sun River watershed. MDFWP and USFWS personnel are not currently aware of any wolf presence or activity within the general project area, nor do they foresee any conflict with the proposed action (Nordstrom, personal comm.).

Aquatics/Fisheries

Fisheries and their associated aquatics have little relevance for this project due to its distance from the Sun River. Muddy Creek has been impaired by erosion and a heavy sediment load resulting in negative impacts to the aquatic resources.

3.11.2 Impacts

Wildlife

The No-Action Alternative would have no impact on wildlife.

The Preferred Alternative would likely result in the short-term displacement only of various bird species during the period of construction as well as localized, but recoverable, losses of small rodents and occasional herptiles occupying the grassy areas and wet ditches within the right-of-way (ROW). Further, the Preferred Alternative would have **no effect** upon any of the region's species currently listed under the federal Endangered Species Act, nor any ramifications for those individuals listed as Sensitive Species of Concern within Montana.

Based upon the current status of terrestrial fauna within the immediate project area, no significant impacts are expected from the Preferred Alternative. The project would result in the short-term displacement of numerous species, particularly within the neo-tropical birds, during the period of construction. Localized, but quickly recoverable, losses of small rodents and occasional herptiles occupying the grassy areas and wet ditches within the ROW would also unavoidably occur. No substantive impacts should result for Rare and Sensitive Species either, as none are known or suspected to currently reside within the proposed construction limits.

Interviews conducted with several MDT section maintenance personnel have, however, revealed white-tailed deer mortality to be a persistent problem with the increasing traffic volume. It has been indicated that as many as two deer a day were being killed by vehicles in the Sun River-Vaughn area at the peak of seasonal deer movement, i.e., fall months. Sufficient deer numbers, high vehicle speeds, driver inattentiveness, and the juxtaposition of US Highway 89 to attractive crops and nearby riparian cover all contribute to this vehicle/animal conflict. Presently, specific wildlife crossings within the project have not been identified other than one occurring near Sand Hill (RP 3), where area records suggest a higher than normal occurrence rate.

Expansion of the current facility to five lanes would clearly elevate the risk of crossing for deer and other forms of wildlife. Some of this threat is diminished by the motorist's ability to better maneuver and avoid all types of collisions with a wider roadway. It also may be partially offset by the proposed grubbing and widening of clear zones that theoretically allow motorists to see approaching wildlife sooner. In spite of these design improvements, higher traffic volumes moving at greater speeds suggest that project-related deer mortality would likely increase with the construction of the Preferred Alternative.

Threatened and/or Endangered Species

The No-Action Alternative would have no effect on threatened or endangered species.

Because no Peregrine Falcons or Gray Wolves are known or suspected to either reside in or frequent the project area at this time, impacts to the species are not anticipated. The Bald Eagle is considered to have a limited presence within the project corridor. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative would have no effect on these three species.

Based on the above information and recommended mitigation/coordination measures, it is determined that implementation of the proposed action would have **no affect** on the Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon or the Gray Wolf.

Aquatics/Fisheries

The No-Action Alternative would have no effect on aquatic resources or fisheries.

For the Preferred Alternative, assuming application of MDT's Best Management Practices, no water quality impacts are expected. There is a potential for fuels and other toxic substances common to staging and construction areas to impact downstream amphibians, reptiles and the health of downstream wetlands.

3.11.3 Mitigation

- Water Quality mitigation measures described in Section 3.9.3 would be followed.
- Fuels and other toxic substances common to staging and construction areas would be managed to avoid spills into waterways or into wetlands.

Wildlife

A number of practical preventions have been developed throughout the country, as reported for MDT in *The Significance of Highway Deer-Kill in Montana's Bitterroot Valley with Review of Preventative Measures* (Harris, 1994). Often limited by site specificity, these measures have relevance in many instances. An effective one requiring planning on a broader community scale is the calculated placement of the area's more palatable crops away from highway stretches bordering riparian (hiding) cover. Warning signs, deer reflectors, or other practical deterrents also have merit and should be considered by MDT for the vicinity of RP 3 or any crossings later identified.

Lastly, as relates to the protection of swallows:

- Eventual removal of the old Muddy Creek and BN Overpass structures is strongly recommended to **NOT** occur between May 10th and August 20th in any given year. To do so would result in the needless destruction of active cliff swallow nests so simply avoided by requiring this three-month moratorium on demolition.

A special (contractor) provision outlining allowable time frames for construction, and indicating the reason for, would be written due to the number of active cliff swallow nests present.

Threatened and/or Endangered Species

Acknowledging this limited presence of the Bald Eagle in the project vicinity, the following basic measures are recommended as special provisions to contractors:

- An MDT biologist should be informed of any occupied bald eagle nest observed within 0.8 kilometers (0.5 miles) of the proposed project during construction.

- All overhead power utility relocations should be raptor-proofed in accordance with *Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines* (Olendorff et. al., 1981).

3.12 Floodplains

3.12.1 Existing Conditions

Figure 3-4 shows the location of the 100-year floodplains for the Sun River and Muddy Creek, within the project study area. Portions of US Highway 89 are inundated by the 100-year floodplain. This information is based upon flood hazard area maps prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for Cascade County. The project area lies within the 100-year delineated floodplain of the Sun River. Sun River is the primary drainage in the vicinity of the Vaughn-Sun River project area. The 100-year floodplain is 1609 meters to 2414 meters (1 to 1.5 miles) wide within the study area. It flows from west to east and meanders through the gently rolling terrain somewhat parallel to US Highway 89. A second drainage in the study area is Muddy Creek, near the Town of Vaughn, with its floodplain located south of the US Highway 89 embankment. Muddy Creek flows to the south, and is located at RP .75.

The natural and beneficial floodplain values associated with water resources in the project area include: natural moderation of floods, water quality maintenance, fish, wildlife, plants, natural beauty, and irrigation.

3.12.2 Impacts

The No-Action Alternative would result to no new encroachment on the 100-year floodplain.

Executive Order 11988 and FHWA's floodplain regulations (23 CFR 650, Subpart A) requires an evaluation of the proposed action to determine if any of the alternatives encroach on the base floodplain. Any proposal to increase road grades would need to be evaluated to determine the effects on flood elevation, re-direction of flows, and the increased risk to insurable property. If the road grade elevation is raised within the delineated Sun River floodplain areas, a complete study would be required to verify that the flood carrying capacity would not be reduced. This situation would, however, substantially decrease risk to the traveling public, since the road surface would no longer be inundated during flooding periods. Flood elevations would be consistent with the current FEMA floodplain regulations, and the proper coordination would be maintained with Cascade County. MDT standard procedures would ensure that the proper floodplain permits would be obtained from Cascade County due to these encroachments in the delineated floodplain.

The Preferred Alternative would result in approximately 7.503 hectares (18.54 acres) of encroachment within the 100-year floodplain. The bridge replacement at Muddy Creek would involve encroachment to the 100-year floodplain on the downstream face of the existing bridge.

This longitudinal encroachment of the 100-year floodplain is due to the proposed roadway widening and is anticipated to have negligible impacts on the flood carrying capacity of the floodplain. Encroachments on the Sun River floodplain include: from Station 650+00 to Station 760+00, from Station 770+00 to Station 790+00, and from Station 815+00 to 840+00. These longitudinal encroachments include 46 cm (18 inches) and 61 cm (24 inches) irrigation pipes, several 61 cm (24 inches) drain pipes, and a 122 cm (48 inches) drain pipe.

Generalized impacts of this encroachment are:

- The Preferred Alternative would result in a temporary negative effect to natural and beneficial floodplain values due to increased sediment runoff and deposition during construction. These effects would be minimized by prompt revegetation of disturbed areas.

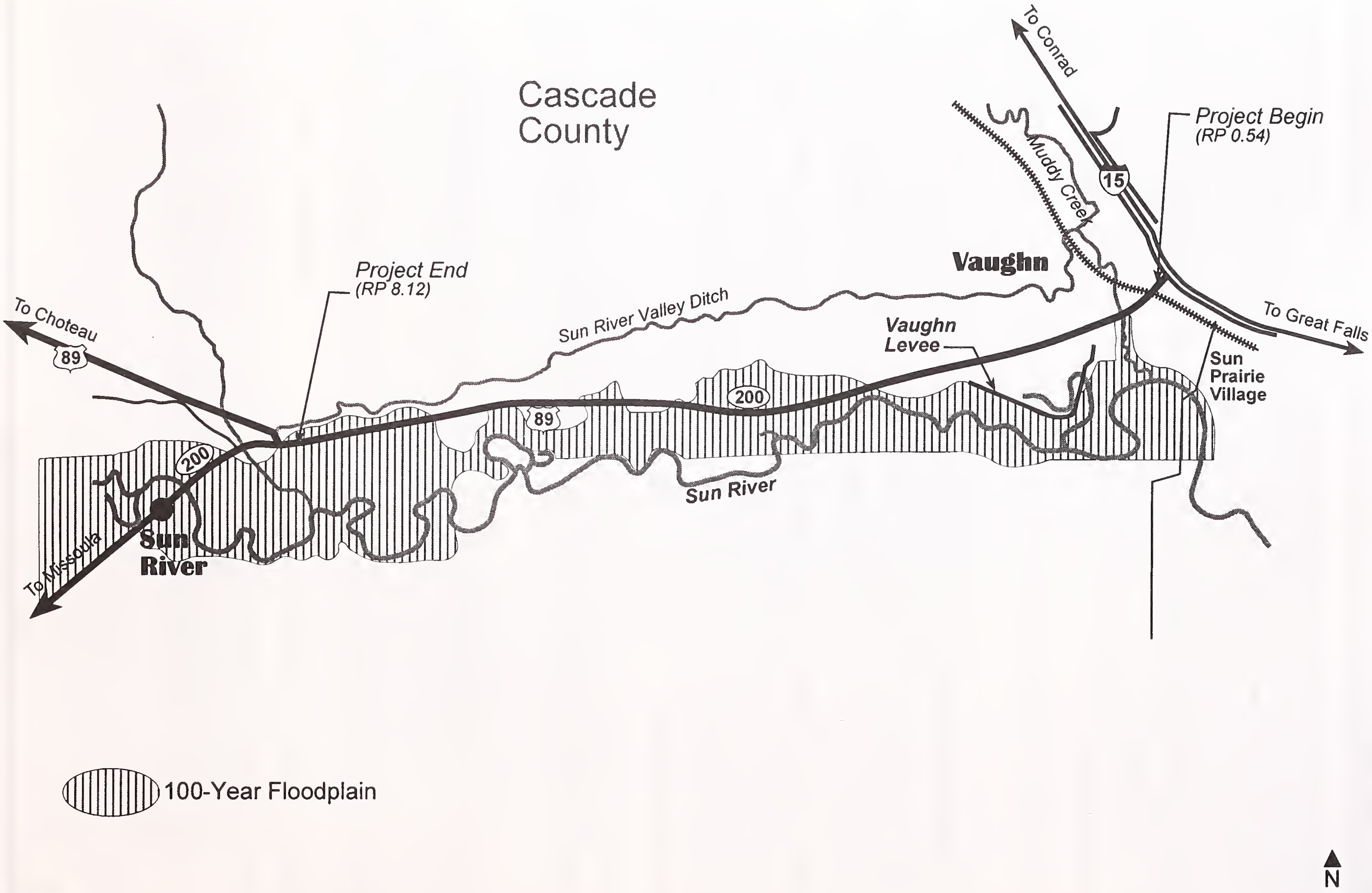


Figure 3-4

FEMA 100-Year Floodplain

- The Preferred Alternative would not be expected to support incompatible floodplain development, since no additional development would be induced.

- The Preferred Alternative would result in a permanent positive effect to natural and beneficial floodplain values because it would contain roadway runoff in the roadway ditch, which would reduce water quality impacts.

- This project would not promote or encourage development within this delineated floodplain, or increase flood liability hazards as a result of its construction. The proposed project is therefore considered to be in compliance with E.O. #11988.

3.12.3 Mitigation

The following mitigation measures would be implemented as part of the Preferred Alternative:

- Construct the road so that the fill material is stable, compacted, well-graded, pervious, generally unaffected by water and frost, devoid of trash, asphalt and other petroleum based material, devoid of tree stumps, limbs, leaves, sawdust or other organic material, and appropriate for the purpose of supporting the intended use and/or permanent structure.

- Construct piers to align with the flow such that the obstruction of flow is minimized.

- Install revetment, such as riprap, to protect the abutment and embankments from scour.

- Construct the foundation and structure to withstand the effects of scour during the 500-year storm.

- The roadway shall be located as far from the stream as possible and shall not result in a cumulative increase in the base flood elevations, after allowable encroachments into the floodway fringe, exceeding one-half foot.

The Preferred Alternative would require a permit issued by Cascade County. To evaluate the permit application, the Floodplain Administrator would review the construction plans, flood-proofing measures, and hydraulic calculations certified by a Professional Engineer.

Since the floodplain encroachment that would occur with the Preferred Alternative is not considered a significant encroachment, no practicable alternative finding is necessary.

3.13 Cultural Resources

3.13.1 Existing Conditions

A cultural resource survey including a field assessment and historic research was conducted by an MDT consultant in August 1993. The purpose of the survey was to obtain information specific to each property identified, and to develop an historic overview of the area. This public records review was conducted at the Cascade County Clerk and Recorder and Appraiser, the Great Falls Public Library, and the Montana Historical Society Library and Archives in Helena. Information was also obtained through personal interviews with property owners in the project area and with long-time local residents.

Of the eighteen historic properties identified in the cultural resources survey, the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred on September 15, 1993 that six sites were eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). These properties are listed in Table 3-6 and shown on Figure 3-5. See SHPO correspondence in Appendix A.

Table 3-6
Eligible Sites within the Study Area

I.D. Number	Name/Description
24CA359	Presley H. and Matilda Rowles Ranch
24CA360	Thomas and Mary Ford Clary Ranch
24CA361	Robert Simpson and Sue McClanahan Ford Ranch
24CA363	Bernard and Nellie Murray Farmstead
24CA375	Manchester Schoolhouse
24CA376	Great Falls & Canada Railway (Great Northern Railway)

3.13.2 Impacts

There would be no impact on historic properties from the No-Action Alternative.

The SHPO determined that the Preferred Alternative would have **no effect** to the following four properties:

- 24CA359 Presley H. and Matilda Rowles Ranch
- 24CA360 Thomas and Mary Ford Clary Ranch
- 24CA375 Manchester Schoolhouse
- 24CA376 Great Falls & Canada Railway (Great Northern Railway)

The SHPO also determined that the Preferred Alternative would have **no adverse effect** to the Ford Ranch (24CA361) and the Murray Farmstead (24CA363). The "no adverse effect" determination was made on the Ford Ranch because the site would lose six cottonwood trees as a

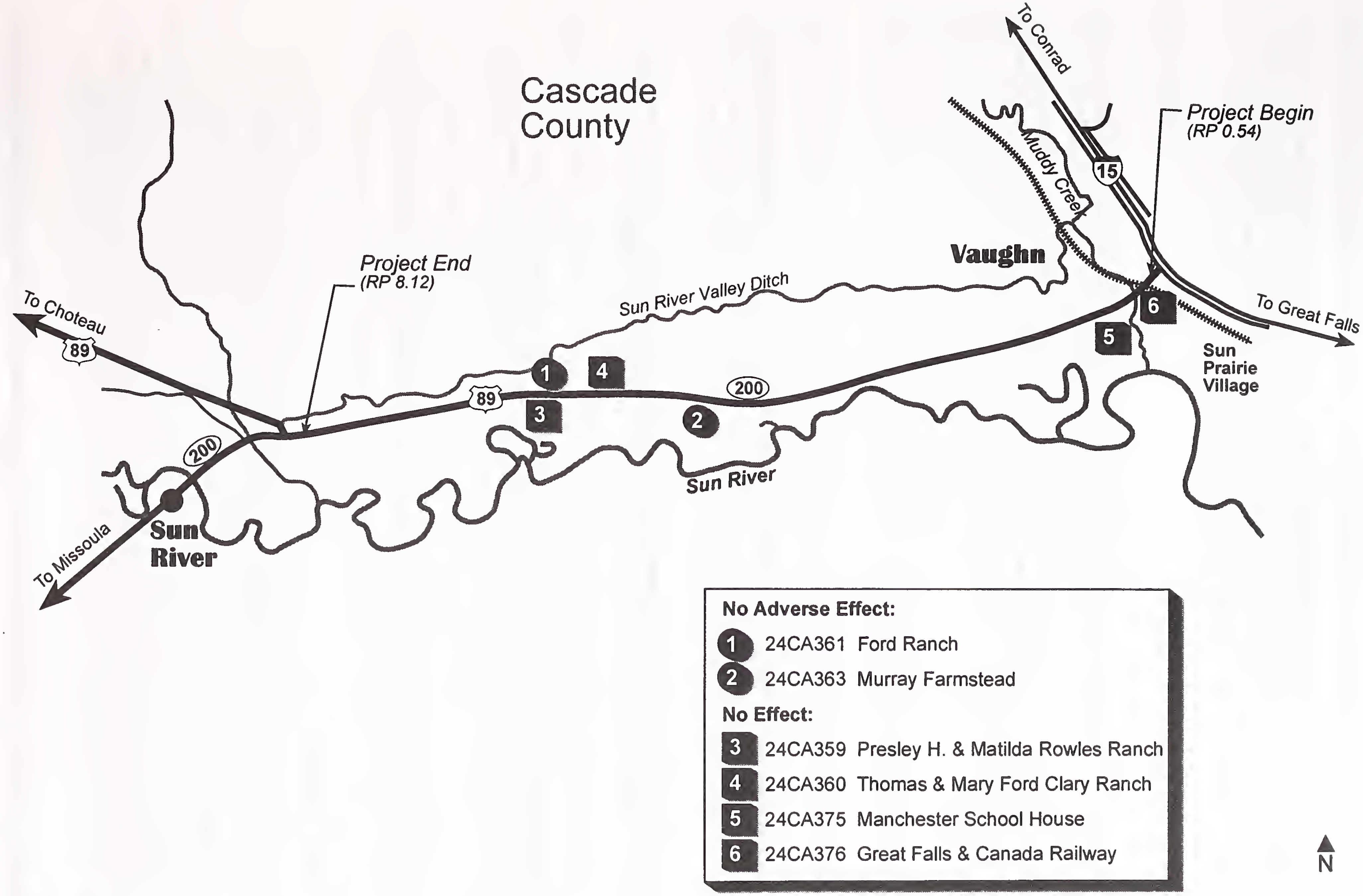


Figure 3-5

Effect to Eligible Historic Properties

result of roadway widening and right of way acquisition; the Murray Farmstead would lose ten cottonwood trees as a result of right of way acquisition and "clear zone" requirements. See SHPO correspondence (dated February 27, 1998) in Appendix A. Impacts to the Murray Farmstead and Ford Ranch are discussed further in Chapter 4, Section 4(f) Evaluation.

3.13.3 Mitigation

The trees lost with construction of the Preferred Alternative would be replaced with the appropriate number of trees outside the proposed new right-of-way boundary for both the Ford Ranch and Murray Farmstead sites. The SHPO concurred with the above determinations on February 27, 1998. See SHPO letters reflecting this concurrence in Appendix A. Mitigation for the Murray Farmstead and Ford Ranch are discussed further in Chapter 4, Section 4(f) Evaluation.

3.14 Hazardous Materials

3.14.1 Existing Conditions

MDT conducted an investigation and requested information regarding the presence of hazardous materials in the project corridor. One site located within the project corridor was found to be contaminated with hazardous materials.

There is a truck stop that was a former service station, and a convenience store and restaurant located at the intersection of US Highway 89 and Second Street in Vaughn.

A total of five underground storage tanks (USTs) exist at the site. In March 1990, contamination was discovered during removal of an 1893-liter (500-gallon) tank on the east side. Approximately 5,359.5 cubic meters (7,010 cubic yards) of petroleum-contaminated soil and 75,708 liters (20,000 gallons) of petroleum-contaminated groundwater were removed from the site.

However, soil contamination remains at, and adjacent to the site: beneath the current structure, beneath Second Street and Highway 200.

3.14.2 Impacts

There would be no impacts to hazardous material sites with the No-Action Alternative.

The Preferred Alternative is not expected to encounter hazardous waste during project construction. The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) acknowledged prior to initiation of the corrective actions that removal of all soil exceeding Montana UST Program Action levels may not be attainable, as contamination was known to exist in areas which were not considered practicably accessible, such as under roadways. (Highway 200 and Second

Street), MDT right-of-ways, and structures. The DEQ in subsequent correspondence has informed MDT that the contamination is deeper than would be encountered during construction and advised the MDT that no mitigation would be required for the Preferred Alternative.

3.15 Visual

3.15.1 Existing Conditions

US Highway 89 between Vaughn and Sun River contains relatively broad vistas with gentle bluffs with Shaw, Crown and Square Butte seen to the south when traveling west. The roadway alignment is gently rolling in places, with the most substantial grade changes near the Muddy Creek crossing and the Burlington Northern Railroad crossing. Travelers heading in either direction along US Highway 89 are exposed to natural pastoral and agricultural fields in the distance. The highway corridor runs adjacent to agricultural fields, a number of residential communities and the border of the Vaughn business district.

Foreground landscape units are those that are immediately visible along the corridor. They are created and influenced by such factors as the type of adjacent land use, the width of the roadway, the roadway elements, and the character of the adjacent vegetation. Combining these factors provides the traveler with a general character or "feel" of open or closed views along the roadway. Foreground landscape units included within this study corridor are as follows:

- Agricultural. The majority of the adjacent land use is pasture/agricultural fields. Farming equipment and outbuildings can be seen directly from the roadway. These provide generally open views with little or no tree canopy.

- Riparian. At a number of locations along the highway corridor mature cottonwood trees associated with the Sun River floodplain provide a break in the otherwise open landscape.

- At approximately RP 6.3/6.4 a wide expanse of cottonwood trees form a broad row creating a visual barrier through which US Highway 89 passes. These trees are a part of tree-lined driveways to the adjacent residences. Other locations where stands of cottonwoods occur may be associated with a farm windbreak.

- Residential. There are a number of residential developments along the corridor. Most have access to US Highway 89 along a rural country road entering the neighborhood. Most of these neighborhoods are low density and associated landscaping provides some interest in the middle ground views. Some residences are located within 24 meters (80 feet) of the roadway.

- US Highway 89 contains roadway elements typical to this rural setting such as: grass-lined ditches, above ground utility lines, varied right-of-way or property fencing, no curb and gutter, and minimal signage.

- Commercial/Public. The highway runs along the border of the Town of Vaughn business district. Along this portion of the road are a variety of businesses including a gas station, a number of bars, the US Post Office, and a grocery store resulting in a variety of architectural styles. Many of these businesses have parking between the paved edge and the building façade, increasing the visual width of the corridor. A variety of sign styles are associated with this business corridor.

The following views of special interest or significance occur in the study area:

- At RP 7.5, the historic farm is not entirely visible from the highway. The barn is brick, two stories, with a full-scale horse weathervane. This property dates to 1885.

- At RP 6.3, the view from the alignment contains an historic brick home with a tree-lined driveway. Attention is drawn to its mature cottonwood trees along the entry drive and US Highway 89 right-of-way.

- From the crest of Sand Hill a westbound traveler would see a broad panoramic view across the adjacent agricultural/pasture land with occasional related buildings and the gentle rolling bluffs in the background.

3.15.2 Impacts

There would be no visual impacts associated with the No-Action Alternative.

Visual impacts associated with the Preferred Alternative would be both short term as well as long term. Short-term visual impacts include:

- Construction equipment and excavated material associated with construction in the staging areas.

- Dust and debris associated with construction activity.

- Traffic congestion associated with construction activity.

- Removal of vegetation.

Long-term visual impacts associated with the Preferred Alternative include:

- An expanded pavement width.

- Cut and fill slopes, which would change the existing landscape character immediately adjacent to the roadway.

- Loss of mature cottonwood trees and vegetation.
- Bridges, ROW fencing, concrete-lined irrigation ditches, bus turn-outs, a pedestrian/bicyclist path.

The expanded pavement width would increase the motorist's foreground view of the roadway considerably from that provided by the existing road. There would be an increase in pavement width from approximately 8.53 meters (28 feet) to a range of 11 meters (36 feet) to 15.2 meters (50 feet). This would be perceived as a dramatic difference in visual character with more extensive foreground views of pavement.

Minor visual changes could occur in areas where the expanded roadway requires reconfiguration of landform and grade due to cut and fill slopes.

The loss of mature cottonwood trees and vegetation would occur mainly at the residential areas, the historical properties, and along the corridor and at the windbreaks. In addition to losing a key element in the scenic quality at these locations, the trees and vegetation provide residents with screening from the property to the highway and privacy from highway users.

3.15.3 Mitigation

The vegetation areas impacted would be revegetated with native grasses and recommended seed mixes. The plant palette for revegetation would be derived from tree, shrubs and grass species existing in the corridor. Tree replacement would help to sustain or enhance current foreground visual quality.

3.16 Prime and Unique Farmland

3.16.1 Existing Conditions

Agricultural areas predominantly occupy US Highway 89 from Sun River to Vaughn. According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), several soils designated as "prime and unique farmland or farmland of statewide and local importance" are located along this corridor.

3.16.2 Impacts

Direct farmland impacts can result from removal of cultivated or potentially cultivated lands by placement of impervious surface, cut and fill slopes, and/or right-of-way.

The No-Action Alternative would not result in any impacts to Prime and Unique farmlands or farmlands of Statewide or Local Importance.

The Preferred Alternative would result in conversion of approximately 89.4 hectares (221 acres) of Prime and Unique farmland, and 29.9 hectares (74 acres) of Statewide and Local Importance farmland.

Soil maps and a corresponding list of Prime Farmlands for the Cascade County Area were obtained from the NRCS to determine prime farmland impacts. The total hectares in the project area is 217.2 (536.7 acres), and the total hectares to be converted, as a result of the Preferred Alternative, is 119.3 (295 acres). A Farmland Conversion Impact Rating form (#AD-1006) was completed in accordance with the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA-7 USC 4201, et seq.), and is contained in Appendix A. The total points on this form for this proposed project's impacts is less than 160. Therefore, under the provisions of 7 CFR 658.4 (c), no additional consideration for protection is necessary.

3.17 Construction

3.17.1 Impacts

The No-Action alternative would have no construction-related effects.

There are several impacts associated with the construction of the Preferred Alternative. The temporary construction-related impacts include:

- **Noise and Vibration**. The operation of various types of machinery, such as heavy earth moving equipment, paving equipment, power tools, pile drivers, and trucks, in close proximity to residences would create an undesirable noise condition. Impacts from vibration are also likely during the construction period.

- **Fugitive Dust**. The operation of heavy equipment on exposed soils would result in the release of fugitive dust into the air.

- **Erosion and Sedimentation**. Runoff from areas of exposed soils may affect water quality of surface waterways. Sedimentation may occur when eroded soils collect in areas below the construction site.

- **Water Quality**. Concrete construction within the river channel creates an opportunity for the release of contaminants to the watershed. Petroleum materials can be spilled during the operation and maintenance of construction equipment.

- **Visual**. Stockpiles of earth materials, stacks of construction materials, and parked equipment would cause a temporary visual impact to the residents near the locations of construction activities.

- **Traffic.** Traffic patterns would be disrupted for travelers who utilize US Highway 89. Traffic would remain on US Highway 89 during construction of the project and a minimum of one lane in each direction would be maintained.

  There would be detours and construction stages associated with the Burlington Northern Railroad overpass and Muddy Creek bridge construction. The existing structures would carry traffic while the new structures are being constructed, and the traffic would be switched over onto the new structure when the old structures are removed.

- **Access.** Local access to intersecting roads and to residences would be maintained during construction. However, limited access and minor detours would be necessary at certain locations during this period.

3.17.2 Construction Mitigation

Construction impacts would be mitigated through implementation of control measures during construction. These measures may include:

- Limit noise-generating construction activities to occur between the hours of 7:00 AM and 5:00 PM near residential areas to minimize noise impacts.

- Require the use of appropriate dust suppression measures to minimize dust impact associated with the construction activities.

- Require erosion control methods, such as temporary and permanent seeding and mulching, within a reasonable time after the soil is disrupted.

- Require sedimentation control methods, such as check dam, silt fences, and sedimentation basins along drainage routes and adjacent to sensitive areas.

- Require that the contractor implement an approved water quality control plan, so that appropriate measures are in place in the event of an accidental spill.

- Designate a suitable construction staging area, and require that the contractor store materials and equipment within that area to minimize the visual impact.

- Develop construction staging and traffic control plans that minimize the disruption to traffic and access.

- Provide adequate public notice and maintain coordination with area residents to keep the public apprised of the construction progress and to warn of closures and detours.

3.18 Secondary and Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts are defined as impacts that "result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) undertakes such other actions."

Known projects in this vicinity, with an assessment of probable cumulative impact, are:

> The Sun River Bridge at Manchester project is a bridge replacement and construction of new approach roadways. This project is located on County Road #502 in Cascade County near Manchester, approximately 7.25 kilometers (4.5 miles) east of the Sun River to Vaughn project. Project limits are expected to extend an estimated 45 meters (148 feet) from either end of the new bridge. The bridge would be constructed according to current MDT Bridge Design Standards and AASHTO specifications. This project is not expected to occur at the same time as the Sun River to Vaughn project, therefore, no cumulative construction impacts would result.
>
> The Great Falls Bridge Deck Rehabilitation project is a bridge rehabilitation project at nine locations on Interstate 15, (I-15), in the Great Falls area, Cascade County, approximately 13.3 kilometers (8.25 miles) east of the Sun River to Vaughn project. This project would repair, revise or replace any bridge deck component that compromises the safety, serviceability, or structural adequacy of a bridge. This project is not expected to occur at the same time as the Sun River to Vaughn project, therefore, no cumulative construction impacts would result.

As described above, none of these MDT projects would have any significant cumulative environmental impacts on this proposed action. This proposed new construction and reconstruction project would also have no significant cumulative environmental impacts on these or any other MDT projects in the project vicinity.

3.19 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

Implementation of the Preferred Alternative would involve a commitment of a range of natural, physical, human and fiscal resources. Land that would be used in the construction of a build alternative would be considered an irreversible commitment during the time period that the land is used for a highway facility. However, if a greater need for use of the land were to arise, or if the highway facility were no longer needed, the land would be converted to another use. At present, there is no reason to believe such a conversion would ever be necessary or desirable.

Considerable amounts of fossil fuels, labor and highway construction materials such as cement, aggregate and bituminous material would be expended in the construction of a build alternative. Additionally, large amounts of labor and natural resources would be used in the fabrication and preparation of construction materials. These materials are generally not retrievable. However, they are not in short supply and their use would not have an adverse effect on continued availability of these resources. Any construction would also require a substantial expenditure of both state and federal funds, which are not retrievable and would require allocation of funds, which could be used by other projects.

4.0 Section 4(f) Evaluation

Title 49 USC 303 (also 23 USC 138) states that "The Secretary may approve a transportation program or project (other than any project for a park road or parkway under Section 204 of title 23) requiring the use of publicly owned land of a public park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge of national, State or local significance, or land of an historic site of national, State, or local significance, as determined by the Federal, State, or local officials having jurisdiction over the park area, refuge or site only if a determination is made:

1. there is no prudent or feasible alternative to using that land; and

2. the program or project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the park, recreation area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or historic site resulting from the use."

This chapter describes Section 4(f) resources in the study area, impacts to the sites, alternatives that were considered to avoid using land from the sites and the action taken to minimize harm to the sites.

The following discussion refers only to those particular properties, adjacent to the project corridor, which would incur some impact as a result of the implementation of the Preferred Alternative. The first portion of this section, 4.1, provides a short description of the historic properties adjacent to US Highway 89 followed by a description (in Section 4.2) of the usage for these properties. Section 4.3 discusses Avoidance Alternatives, Section 4.4 provides measures to minimize harm, and Sections 4.5 and 4.6 discuss coordination and the final Section 4(f) conclusion.

4.1 Section 4(f) Properties

There are a total of three Section 4(f) properties located adjacent to the Preferred Alternative, two historic properties eligible for the National Register for Historic Places (NRHP) and one public park. Table 4-1 lists these properties and indicates whether or not a direct impact to the site would occur.

Table 4-1
Section 4(f) Properties

Section 4(f) Property	Direct Impact
Ford Ranch	Yes
Murray Farmstead	Yes
Vaughn Park	Yes

Ford Ranch

The Ford Ranch includes twelve features constructed between 1874 and the 1930s. This site is eligible for the NRHP for three reasons. The first reason is due to its association with the settlement of the Sun River Valley and Montana's pioneer cattle industry. The second reason the site is eligible for the NRHP is because of its association with Robert, Sue and Lee Ford, a significant pioneer Montana family of cattlemen and community builders. Lee Ford was a member of the State Highway Commission for the mid-1930s until 1949. And lastly, the site is eligible for the NRHP because it is representative of rural farmstead architecture.

Murray Farmstead

The Murray Farmstead includes fourteen features constructed over a century between the 1870s and the 1970s. The site is eligible for the NRHP because of its association with the livestock and agricultural development of the Sun River Valley, and because it is representative of rural farmstead architecture.

Vaughn Park

Vaughn Park is a 2.51 hectares (6.2 acre) publicly-owned park with fee simple ownership. The park is open at all times to the public and contains baseball/softball facilities. The park is the only public recreation area available to the unincorporated community of Vaughn (Cascade County). The sole purpose for Vaughn Park is for recreational use, and the baseball/softball facilities allow Vaughn to participate in sanctioned league baseball. Correspondence with the Cascade County Park Board (see Appendix A) stated that there are no proposed plans by the park board to change the existing recreational area or use of Vaughn Park.

4.2 Description of Impacts to Section 4(f) Properties

Direct impact to a Section 4(f) property results from the purchase lease, easement or agreement to change the use of all or a portion of the property. Direct conversion of use resulting from direct impact is one way a Section 4(f) property may be changed. The other is through constructive use. A constructive use results from any action that "substantially impairs" a vital use of a 4(f) property. This can occur from noise impacts, visual impacts, major access impacts and ecological intrusion.

Ford Ranch

At the Ford Ranch, the proposed centerline would be shifted (to the south) from the existing 140 meters (460± feet) from the property's buildings to 146 meters (478± feet). The site includes 103 cottonwood trees, including six located along the right-of-way fence. Although the proposed centerline would be located 5.5 meters (18± feet) further away from the property, widening and right-of-way acquisition would result in the removal of six trees along the right-of-way boundary. The majority of the vegetative screen separating the buildings from the roadway would be left intact. None of the twelve buildings on the site would be impacted by the project. The closest building on the site would be 146 meters (478± feet) from the proposed centerline and 134 meters (439.5± feet) from the proposed pavement edge. The buildings, moreover, would be screened from the roadway by 67 existing cottonwood trees and six new cottonwoods. The setting of the site would remain intact and the characteristics that make it eligible for the NRHP would not be compromised.

Murray Farmstead

At the Murray Farmstead, the proposed centerline would be located 0.6 meters (two feet) further away from the property. Proposed widening, however, would place the proposed pavement edge closer to the site. The property's buildings are located 76 meters (250± feet) from the existing centerline; nine of the site's 37 cottonwood trees are located just outside the right-of-way at 18 meters (60± feet) from the existing centerline. The proposed centerline would be located 77 meters (252± feet) from the property's buildings. Ten of the trees would be 11 meters (36± feet) from the proposed pavement edge and would be within both the right-of-way and "clear zone" for the roadway. These ten cottonwood trees function as a screen between the property's buildings and the roadway. The trees would be removed. None of the site's historic buildings would be affected by the proposed project and the qualities that make the site eligible for the NRHP would not be compromised.

Vaughn Park

At Vaughn Park, the proposed roadway widening would result in approximately 4.5 meters (15 feet) of right-of-way encroachment to the existing Vaughn Park. In addition, construction activity in the park would fill in the existing ditch (along the edge of the park) to a flat grade matching the existing ground, leaving the park in a more usable condition.

4.3 Classification of Impacts

The impacts to these three Section 4(f) properties have been reviewed and a determination has been made that the impacts fall within the classification of a Programmatic Section 4(f) evaluation. The reasons for this determination are:

- The Preferred Alternative is designed to improve the operational characteristics, safety and physical condition of an existing highway facility on essentially the same alignment.

- The affected Section 4(f) sites involved are publicly owned parks and historic sites located adjacent to the existing highway.

- The amount and location of the Section 4(f) lands to be impacted would not impair the use of the remaining Section 4(f) land, in whole or in part.

- The park land to be acquired is less than 10 percent of the total size of the property.
- The proximity impacts of the Preferred Alternative on the remaining Section 4(f) land does not impair the use of the land for its intended purpose.
- The Preferred Alternative does not require the disturbance or removal of archeological resources that are important to preserve in place rather than to recover for archeological research.
- The impact on the Section 4(f) potential historic sites resulting from the use of the land must be considered minor. The word minor is narrowly defined as having a "no effect" or "no adverse effect" on the qualities, which qualified the site for listing or eligibility on the National Register for Historic Places.
- The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) agreed, in writing (in Appendix A), with the assessment of the impacts of the Preferred Alternative and the proposed mitigation for the historic sites.
- The Cascade County Park Board agreed, in writing (in Appendix A) with the assessment of the impacts. *Written concurrence from the Cascade County Park Board for proposed mitigation is pending.*

4.4 Feasible or Prudent Alternatives

As described in the programmatic Section 4(f) regulations, there are three alternatives to avoid any use of the Section 4(f) properties.

No-Action Alternative

The No-Action Alternative would not meet the purpose and need to correct the existing roadway deficiencies resulting in a high crash rate. Safety conditions would continue to deteriorate resulting in unsafe conditions for motorists.

Improvements Without Using the Adjacent Section 4(f) Properties

At the Ford Ranch, the roadway would need to be shifted to the south in order to avoid encroachment onto the property. Shifting the alignment would result in greater right-of-way impacts due to the existing irrigation culverts located in the area for prime farmland. In addition, shifting the alignment in the immediate area of the Ford Ranch to avoid or minimize impacts would result in sharp curve angles, creating substantial safety hazards to the traveling public. For these reasons, this alternative was not considered feasible or prudent.

At the Murray Farmstead, the roadway would need to be shifted to the north in order to avoid encroachment onto the property. Shifting the alignment would result in greater impacts due to the existing irrigation culverts located in the area for prime farmland and would impact trees on the north side of the roadway. In addition, shifting the alignment in the immediate area of the Murray Farmstead to avoid or minimize impacts would result in sharp curve angles, creating substantial safety hazards to the traveling public. For these reasons, this alternative was not considered feasible or prudent.

At Vaughn Park, several options were evaluated to avoid impacting the park including: building a retaining wall, lowering the grade of the roadway, and constructing a "barn-roof" (a deep ditch section adjacent to the roadway) through this section. However none of theses alternatives were considered feasible and prudent. A retaining wall would create substantial drainage issues in the park. Lowering the grade would result in greater impacts to the park and would not allow for the construction of the proposed pedestrian tunnel. Constructing a "barn-roof" would not comply with design standards, would create substantial drainage problems, and would pose safety concerns for motorists with the ditch.

Alternative on New Location (Off-Alignment Alternative)

A bypass alternative to the north was developed and evaluated. This alternative would avoid impact to the Section 4(f) properties. However, US Highway 89 is an existing major east-west corridor that is currently used as a major route in Montana. Building an off-alignment alternative would result in excessive environmental impacts including but not limited to: right-of-way and relocation impacts, visual impacts, economic impacts, noise impacts, wildlife impacts, and community impacts. An off-alignment alternative would also have greater impacts to the existing businesses along US 89. In addition, construction costs for an off-alignment alternative would be substantially greater. For all of these reasons, an off-alignment alternative was not considered prudent or feasible.

4.5 Measures to Minimize Harm

On-site field reviews public meetings with concerned citizens, and consultation with the cultural resources historian were held concerning the 4(f) properties. Agreement has been reached to provide the following mitigation:

- Trees would be replaced with the appropriate number of new trees outside the proposed right-of-way boundary for the two historic sites. The trees would be old enough to provide at least a partial screen between the roadway and the historic buildings on the properties. As the trees grow and mature, the screen would be fully restored.

- The initial plan would have actually required the removal of more trees than necessary in the Preferred Alternative. This was modified to minimize impacts.

- The proposed improvements would increase the safety of access entering and exiting the sites because motorists would have a clear line of sight.

- Construction of a pedestrian/bicycle path on the north side of the highway would cross to south side, just west of Vaughn Park, thereby improving access to park.

- Fill existing ditch along park boundary, leaving the area in a more usable condition.

4.6 Coordination

Coordination related to the historic sites and park has occurred with the agency having jurisdiction over the Section 4(f) properties includes:

- Written consultation on primary data gathering with Jon Axline, historian in the Cultural Resources Section of the Montana Department of Transportation.

  a) A meeting was held December 2, 1997 with citizens of Vaughn and Sun River to discuss the areas throughout the corridor. Mitigation strategies were also discussed.

- The letter from the State Historic Preservation Office dated February 27, 1998, in Appendix A, agrees to the impacts and proposed mitigation.

- The Cascade County Park Board agreed, in writing (in Appendix A) with the assessment of impacts at Vaughn Park.

4.7 Conclusion

Based upon the above considerations, there is no feasible or prudent alternative to the use of the land from the Section 4(f) properties and the proposed action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the Section 4(f) properties from such use.

5.0 Comments and Coordination

5.1 Public Involvement Activities

1. **Public Open House.** On December 2, 1997, MDT held a public open house meeting in the Vaughn School Multi-Purpose Room at 7:00 PM and eighty-eight people attended. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the US Highway 89 reconstruction project and obtain public preference for the type of improvements planned. Meeting minutes are contained in Appendix B.

   Fourteen written comments and numerous verbal comments were received at the public meeting. Concerns expressed at the meeting include:

   - Accident hazards caused by driveways accessing the highway
   - Poorly located school bus stops
   - The safety of children crossing the road
   - Blind curves
   - High speeds

2. **Newsletters.** A project informational newsletter was mailed in August of 1998. The purpose of the newsletter was to:

   - Give a brief summary of the proposed project
   - Discuss concerns raised at the public open house meeting held on December 2, 1997
   - Provide recommendations reflecting the concerns raised at the public open house
   - Outline the five alternatives considered
   - Give highlights of the proposed project
   - Describe the Environmental Assessment process
   - Solicit comments from the public
   - Provide the project schedule to the public

   A second informational newsletter was sent in the spring of 1999. The purpose of the second newsletter was to:

   - Give an updated summary of the proposed project with greater detail
   - Discuss the two alternatives advanced, the Preferred Alternative and the No Action Alternative
   - Summarize the improvements associated with the Preferred Alternative
   - Discuss concerns raised at the public meeting on October 13, 1998
   - Provide a contact name and phone number
   - Outline the upcoming steps

3. **Public Meeting.** The second public meeting was held on October 13, 1998, from 7:00 PM to 10:00 PM at the Vaughn School Multi-Purpose Room. This meeting provided an additional forum to solicit public input and project concerns. Forty-three people attended the public meeting resulting in four written comments and a multitude of verbal comments during a question and answer session. A summary of concerns raised at the meeting includes:

    - Right-of-way acquisitions and subsequent property takes
    - Location of school bus turnouts
    - Safety of children crossing the road
    - Location of traffic lights
    - Concerns about the higher speed limits that would be implemented as a result of the project

5.2 List of Agencies with Jurisdiction and/or Permits Required

The following permits or coordination would be required for the Preferred Alternative and would be obtained prior to any disturbance:

• U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Section 404 Permit. MDT must obtain a Clean Water Act: Section 404 Permit from the Corps of Engineers.
• Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Water Quality Division	Section 402 NPDES/MPDES Permit: The MDEQ Water Quality Division would review plans and specification relative to erosion control or a stormwater discharge permit. A Storm Water Erosion Control Plan would be developed for the project.
• Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Water Quality Division	3A Authorization: This authorization must be obtained from the MDEQ Water Quality Division for construction activities that may cause unavoidable short-term violations of state surface water quality standards for turbidity, total dissolved solids, or temperature.
• Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks	124 Stream Protection Act Permit: This permit is needed from the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks to maintain the quality of streams and fisheries affected by highway-related construction.

• Cascade County	Floodplains Development Permit: A floodplain development permit from Cascade County would be required for road and bridge construction and placement of fill in floodplains.

5.3 List of Other Agencies, Persons, or Groups Contacted or Have Contributed Information

Contacts were made with the following agencies or groups regarding this project:

- Cascade County Floodplain Administration
- Cascade County Planning Office
- Federal Highway Administration
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality
  -Air Quality Bureau
  -Environmental and Hazardous Waste Bureau
  -Water Quality Bureau
- Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Montana Department of Transportation
- Montana State Historic Preservation Office
- Sun River Valley School District
- Tri-State Realty
- US Army Corp of Engineers
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Vaughn Irrigation District
- Vaughn Business Owners
- Vaughn Chamber of Commerce
- Cascade County Park Board

6.0 List of Preparers

The following individuals had responsibility for preparing this document:

Name	Project Responsibility	Education/Experience
Jeanette Lostracco, AICP	Project Manager, Environmental Analysis	BA, Geography; Masters of Business Administration. 20 Years experience in environmental analysis.
Gina McAfee, AICP	Project Director, Environmental Analysis	BS, Landscape Architecture. 21 years experience in environmental analysis.
Robert Harris	Biological Resource Report	BS, Wildlife; BS, Fisheries. 20 years of Biological analysis.
Jeremy Keene, P.E.	Civil Engineer	BS, Civil Engineering. 3 years of experience in planning, design, and construction of transportation facilities.
Wendy Wallach	Environmental Analysis	BA, Geography; MURP. 4 years of experience in environmental analysis.
Lisa Thompson	Environmental Analysis	BS, Environmental Biology 2 years experience in environmental analysis.
Diana Bell	Environmental Analysis	BS, Landscape Architecture. 6 years experience in environmental analysis.

7.0 Distribution List

The following agencies, groups and individuals are receiving a copy of the Environmental Assessment:

Cascade County Commissioners
Cascade County Courthouse
Great Falls, MT 59401

Cascade County Planning Board
ATTN: Director
415 Third Street NW
Great Falls, MT 59404

Great Falls City-County Planning Board
ATTN: Director
Civic Center
P.O. Box 5021
Great Falls, MT 59403-5021

Great Falls Public Library
301 2nd Avenue North
Great Falls, MT 59401

Honorable Randy Gray
P.O. Box 5021
Great Falls, MT 59403

Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Permitting and Compliance Division
1520 East Sixth Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

Montana Department of Transportation
ATTN: Joel Marshik, P.E.
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, MT 59620-1001

Montana Department of Transportation
Great Falls District Office
ATTN: Michael P. Johnson
P.O. Box 1359
Great Falls, MT 59403-1359

Montana Environmental Quality Council
Office of the Director
P.O. Box 215, State Capital
Helena, MT 59620

Montana State Historic Preservation Office
1410 8th Avenue
Post Office Box 201202
Helena, Montana 59620-1202

State Library
Collection Management Librarian
151 East Sixth Avenue
Helena, MT 59620-1800

U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
Regulatory Office
1520 East 6th Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620-2301

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
Region 8, Montana Division
ATTN: Janice Brown
301 South Park, Room 448
Drawer 10056
Helena, MT 59626

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Montana Office
301 South Park, Drawer 10096
Helena, MT 59626

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ecological Services
Billings Suboffice
2900 4th Avenue North, Room 301
Billings, MT 59101

Vaughn School-School District No. 74
480 Central Avenue
Vaughn, MT 59487

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Appendix A

Agency Coordination Letters

Montana Department
of Transportation

2701 Prospect Avenue
PO Box 201001
Helena MT 59620-1001

Marc Racicot, Governor

September 23, 1999

Cascade County Park Board
415 3rd St. NW
Great Falls, Montana 59404

Attention: John Nerud Cascade County Planner and Cascade County Park Board

Subject: NH-F 3-1(9)0 F
Vaughn-Sun River
Control No. 1504

As part of the environmental process for the above combined MDT projects, we are requesting your assistance in providing information on the County-owned recreation property, Vaughn Park, which is adjacent to the proposed highway improvements associated with the Vaughn-Sun River project. Vaughn Park has been determined to be a Section 4(f) property. As defined in 49 USC 3030 and 23 CFR 771.135, a Section 4(f) property is a publicly-owned park, recreation area, wildlife/waterfowl refuge or historic site.

As you know, this project would impact approximately 0.055 ha (0.14 acres) of land from the park which was purchased by the Cascade County Park Board. We must satisfy Section 4(f) mitigation requirements and request that you help answer the following question:

Is the $2,550 appraised value of the 0.14 acres we are taking adequate compensation as mitigation for 4(f)?

Please contact Environmental Services at (406) 444-7228 if you have any questions. Otherwise, please sign below and return *the original* of this completed form to us.

Concur John Nerud Date 1/20/2000

John Nerud
Cascade County Planner
Great Falls, Montana

Karl M Helvik

Karl M. Helvik, P.E.
Engineering Bureau Chief
Environmental Services

JMM:KMH:TLY:15044FCONCUR

cc: Mick Johnson. – Great Falls District Administrator, Missoula
Carl S. Peil, P.E. – MDT Preconstruction Engineer
Thomas E. Martin, P.E. – Chief, Right-of-Way
Joel M. Marshik, P.E. – Manager, Environmental Services

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1420 East Sixth Avenue
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
November 16, 1998

NOV 1 5 1998

Lisa Thompson
Carter Burgess
216 16th St. Mall, Suite 1700
Denver, CO 80202

Dear Ms. Thompson:

I am writing this letter in reference to the Montana Department of Transportation project you are working on at Vaughn Montana. I did not find any Land and Water Conservation Fund encumbrances, section 6(f) in this park.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Ken Soderberg

Ken Soderberg
Resource Program Manager

MASTER FILE
COPY

Montana Department of Transportation
Helena, Montana 59620-1001

Memorandum

To: Robert F. Thomson, P.E.
District Engineering Services Supervisor
Great Falls District

From: Cora G. Helm, Environmental Services

Date: October 27, 1997

Subject: F 3-1(9)2
Vaughn-Sun River
CN 1504

The former Vaughn Truck Stop, at the intersection of US Hwy 200 and Second Street in Vaughn, is the site of petroleum contaminated groundwater and soil from leaking underground storage tanks.

The plans were recently reviewed and the site was discussed with the Dept. of Environmental Quality Case Manager for the former truck stop. Contaminated soil exists beneath the highway at this location (Station 11+00 to 12+00, but at depths far deeper than will be encountered during construction. It is unlikely that contaminated groundwater will be encountered either. The case manager for DEQ has told us that no mitigation of contaminated soil will be required during construction of this project.

cc: Karl Helvik, Environmental

Montana Department
of Transportation

2701 Prospect Avenue
PO Box 201001
Helena MT 59620-1001

Marc Racicot, Governor

February 6, 1998

Paul Putz
State Historic Preservation Office
1410 8th Avenue
P.O. Box 201202
Helena, MT 59620-1202

Subject: NH 3-1(9)0
Vaughn - Sun River
Control No. 1504

Enclosed is the Determination of Effect for the above project. We have determined that the proposed project would have **No Effect** to the Rowles Ranch (24CA359), the Clary Ranch (24CA360), the Manchester School (24CA375) and the Great Falls & Canada Railway (24CA376). There would be **No Adverse Effect** to the Ford Ranch (24CA361) and the Murray Farmstead (24CA363) for the reasons specified in the Determination of Effect. We request your concurrence.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 444-6258.

Jon Axline

Jon Axline, historian
Environmental Service

Enclosure

cc: Gene Stettler, P.E., Great Falls District Administrator
Carl Peil, P.E., Preconstruction Bureau
Karl Helvik, P.E., Engineering Services
Gordon Stockstad, Resources Bureau

State Historic Preservation Office
Montana Historical Society
102 Broadway • P.O. Box 201202 • Helena, MT 59620-1202 • 406/444-7715

SEP 16 1993

September 15, 1993

Edrie Vinson, Chief
Environmental and Hazardous Waste
Montana Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

RE: Vaughn - Sun River
F 3-1(9)0

Dear Edrie:

For the properties recorded in this RTI report, **we concur with your recommendation that the following cannot qualify for Register listing:**

24CA357, Hansen Farmstead
24CA358, Rushton Farmstead
24CA362, Olson Farmstead
24CA364, Gray Farmstead
24CA365, Mateja House
24CA366, Robison House
24CA367, Ruston Farmstead
24CA368, Reeverts' Rental
24CA369, Ewing Farmstead
24CA370, Thompson House
24CA371, Augusta Br, GNRR, as recorded, non-contributing
24CA374, G.N. Depot/Vaughn Garage

We concur that the following properties will qualify, under the specified criteria:

24CA359, Rowles Ranch, as specified, A and C. A only for F#2. Additional comments below.
24CA360, Clary Ranch, as specified, A, B, and C. See below.
24CA361, Ford Ranch, as specified, A, B and C.
24CA363, Murray Farmstead, as specified, A and C.
24CA376, Gt. Falls & Canada Ry, A.

We agree with the consultants' recommendation that the Manchester School, 24CA375, is eligible under Criterion C, using Criterion Consideration B. We also were impressed by their well thought out analysis of how the school might be eligible under Criterion A, given the need for additional research. It appears that you have several options in your evaluation of the building --

further discussion, further research into possible associative significance, consultation with the Keeper. Please let us know how you want to proceed.

Finally, just a couple of questions and editing comments. For the Rowles Ranch, 24CA359, the boundary excludes the irrigation ditch passing the property. Should it? There also appear to be two buildings on the USGS map of that property closer to the river but linked by roads to the main cluster. Are these historic, and if so, should they be included within the boundary of the property? Feature 10 at the ranch appears to be older in the photo reproductions than stated. Do we have a solid date of construction for it, or other good evidence to exclude it from the historic buildings?

At the Clary Ranch, 24CA360, the site form captions Feature #3 as Feature #4 in the photos. Also, on p. 19, the sunporch is described as being on the east elevation, but appears to be on the west. These editing changes should be made to complete the record of this property.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and please call if you want to talk about the school.

Sincerely,

Kathy

Katherine M. Huppe
Historical Survey Reviewer

File: Comp/ MDOT project file
CD: 24CA359
CD: 24CA360
CD: 24CA361
CD: 24CA363
CD: 24CA375
CD: 24CA376

FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING

PART I (To be completed by Federal Agency)	Date of Land Evaluation Request 8-3-98
Name of Project US 89, Vaughn-Sun River	Federal Agency Involved USDOT - MDOT Federal Highway Administration
Proposed Land Use Highway Right-of-Way	Cascade County, Montana
PART II (To be completed by SCS)	**Date Request Received by SCS**

Does the site contain prime, unique, statewide or local important farmland? **(If no, the FPPA does not apply - do not complete additional parts of this farm.)**	**Yes** ☑ **No** ☐	**Acres Irrigated 30,000**	**Average Farm Size 1,500 Acres**
Major Crop(s) Wheat, Barley,Alfalfa	**Farmable Land in Govt. Jurisdiction Acres: 1,025,000 %**		**Amount of Farmland as Defined in FPPA Acres: 1,460,000 %**
Name of Land Evaluation System Used	**Name of Local Site Assessment System**		**Date Land Evaluation Returned by SCS 8/6/98**

PART III (To be completed by Federal Agency)		Alternate Site Rating			
		Site A	Site B	Site C	Site D
A. Total Acres to be converted directly		405.9			
B. Total Acres to be converted indirectly		0			
C. Total Acres in Site		536.7			
PART IV (To be completed by SCS) Land Evaluation Information					
A. Total Acres Prime and Unique Farmland		221			
B. Total Acres Statewide and Local Important Farmland		74			
C. Percentage of Farmland in County or Local Govt., unit to be converted		.0001			
D. Percentage of farmland in Govt. Jurisdiction with same or higher relative value.		0			
PART V (To be completed by SCS) Land Evaluation Criterion Relative Value of Farmland to be converted (Scale of 0 to 100 Points)					
PART VI (To be completed by Federal Agency) Site Assessment Criteria (These criteria are explained in 7 CFR 658.8(b))	Max. Pts.				
1. Area Nonurban Use	15	15			
2. Perimeter in Nonurban Use	10	10			
3. Percent of Site Being Farmed	20	15			
4. Protection Provided by State and Local Govt.	20	20			
5. Distance from Urban Builtup Area	N/A	/			
6. Distance to Urban Support Services	N/A	/			
7. Size of present farm unit compared to average	10	10			
8. Creation of nonfarmable farmland	25	5			
9. Availability of farm support services	5	5			
10. On-farm investments	20	15			
11. Effects of conversion on farm support services	25	5			
12. Compatibility with existing agricultural use	10	5			
TOTAL SITE ASSESSMENT POINTS	160	105			
PART VII (To be completed by Federal Agency)					
Relative value of farmland (From Part V)	100				
Total Site Assessment (From Part VI above or a local site assessment)	160				
TOTAL POINTS (Total of above 2 lines)	260				

Site Selected:	Date of Selection	Was a Local Site Assessment Used? Yes ☐ No ☐

Reason for Selection: Site A: Since the total score is less than 160, no further sites need to be considered as stated in CFR 685.4 (c), Part (2)- "Sites receiving a total score of less than 160 (will) be given a minimum level of considerations for protection and no additional sites (need to) be evaluated."

(See instructions on reverse side)

Form AD-1006(10-83)

Montana Department
of Transportation

2701 Prospect Avenue
PO Box 201001
Helena MT 59620-1001

Marc Racicot, Governor

MASTER FILE
COPY

RECEIVED
MAY 28 1999

April 15, 1999

Cascade County Park Board
415 3rd St. NW
Great Falls, Montana 59404

Attention: John Nerod, Cascade County Planner and Cascade County Park Board

Subject: NH-F 3-1(9)0 F
Vaughn-Sun River
Control No. 1504

As part of the environmental process for the above combined MDT projects, we are requesting your assistance in providing information on the County-owned recreation property, Vaughn Park, which is adjacent to the proposed highway improvements associated with the Vaughn-Sun River project. This information will be used to determine whether or not this property is Section 4(f). As defined in 49 USC 3030 and 23 CFR 771.135, a Section 4(f) property is a publicly-owned park, recreation area, wildlife/waterfowl refuge or historic site.

As you know, this project would impact approximately 4.5 meters (15 feet) of land from the park which was purchased by the Cascade County Park Board. We must satisfy Section 4(f) requirements and request that you help us determine if the area is 4(f) by answering questions 1-8 below.

To help us determine if this property is Section 4(f), please check the appropriate response to the following questions.

1. Is the recreation area publicly-owned? Yes X No ___

   Please check the type of ownership:

   Fee simple X
   Public easement ___
   Leased ___
   Other ___

   If "other", explain: ___________________

2. Is the site open to all public? Yes X No ___

   If "no", explain: ___________________

3. What is the availability of this recreation area to the public?

Always open __X__
Some restrictions (i.e., time, days) ____
If "restrictions", explain: ________________

As the official with jurisdiction over the recreation area, you are asked to determine if the area is "significant" for Section 4(f) purposes. "Significant" means that the park/recreation plays an important part in meeting the recreation and park objectives of the community in terms of function and availability.

Questions 4-7 are intended to help you determine if this recreation area is "significant" as defined here. Please answer these to determine your response to Question 8.

4. What is the major purpose of the recreation area?

Regional or Community Park __X__
Neighborhood Park ____
Other (i.e., flood control, etc.) ____
If "other", explain: ________________

5. List the facilities and/or activities available at the recreation area:
Baseball
Softball

6. How does this recreation area compare to other parks or recreation areas under the County's jurisdiction in terms of availability or in meeting the County's park/recreation objectives?
In development stage. Operated by community group.

What features (i.e., recreation facilities) make this area unique?
Only public recreation area available to unincorporated community of Vaughn, Cascade County, MT. Allows Vaughn to participate in sanction league baseball.

Please describe if the recreation area's function is primarily for commercial purposes (e.g., stock car races, annual affairs, etc.), rather than recreation.
Only recreational uses.

7. Are there any proposed plans for or changes to the recreation area or its use?

No - X Yes ____
If "yes", explain: ____________________

8. Based on the responses to Questions 4-7, do you think the recreation area is significant for Section 4(f) purposes?

Yes X No ____
If "yes", explain: ____________________

If your answer to question #8 above is yes, then:

a) Does the attached *"Nationwide" Section 4(f) Evaluation* adequately document the 4(f) impacts from this proposed project? If "yes", would you please indicate your concurrence by signing below:

Concur ____________ Date 5/20/99

~~John Nered~~ John Nerud
Cascade County Planner
Great Falls, Montana

Please contact Environmental Services at (406) 444-7228 if you have any questions. Otherwise, please sign below and return a copy of this completed form to us.

Karl M Helvik
Karl M. Helvik, P.E.
Engineering Bureau Chief
Environmental Services

JMM:KMH:TLY1504LET4(f)

cc: Michael P. Johnson, District Administrator-Great Falls
Carl S. Peil, P.E. – MDT Preconstruction Engineer
Thomas E. Martin, P.E. – Chief, Right-of-Way
Joel M. Marshik, P.E. – Manager, Environmental Services
File

RECEIVED

MAR 02 1998

ENVIRONMENTAL

MONTANA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

NHPA Section 106 \ Other Consultation

This form constitutes a record of your consultation with the Montana Historic Preservation Officer on a particular project and is the official SHPO reply. The dates of SHPO actions appear in the appropriate boxes.

Please Route This Form To:	MDT Jon Axline
Your Agency Requested Consultation with the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) on this Project under this Law or Regulation:	**Section 106**

PROJECT NUMBER	NH3-1(9)0	**AGENCY**	MDT	**OTHER Agency**	
PROJECT NAME and Other Descriptions	Vaughn Sun River	**Dates and Separate Requests to SHPO on This Project**	02/09/98	Josef	
THIS FORM documents			**individual actions.**		
Memo(s) to Sender					

DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY The SHPO Has Considered Whether, per Your Request, Sites Either Meet or Do Not Meet the Criteria of the National Register of Historic Places. The Finding of the SHPO is as Follows:	**Sites which Meet National Register Criteria**		**Sites Not Meeting National Register Criteria**		

Criterion A Findings	**Criterion B Findings**	**Criterion C Findings**	**Criterion D Findings**

DETERMINATIONS OF EFFECT The shpo has considered whether this undertaking will have an affect on significant historic properties. The finding of the shpo is as follows:	**No Eligible or Listed Properties Are Within the Area of Potential Effect**		**The Project Will Have NO EFFECT on These Eligible Properties**	24CA359 24CA360 24CA375 24CA376
Descriptions of Effects on Eligible Property Using 36 CFR 800.9			**The Effect on These Properties Is:**	
			Adverse	
			Not Adverse	24CA361 24CA363

Other Comments:

Reviewer Signatures	Josef J Warhank	27 Feb 98	**Dates**

Appendix B

Meeting Minutes, Meeting Handouts and Newsletters

MINUTES FROM PUBLIC HEARING
Vaughn to Sun River Project
10/13/98
Sun River, Montana

PUBLIC PRESENTATION

Dave Dreher (MDT- Public Involvement Office) opened the meeting.

> We are here tonight for a second meeting to discuss the Vaughn-Sun River Project. When we were here in December of 1997, we took some of your comments and promised that we would come back with a few more details. We have Mike Langenfus with us tonight and he will give a brief a technical presentation. Gene Stettler, the District Administrator from Great Falls is here as well as some support staff who can help answer your questions as they come up. We had a call from Rep. Tropilla who wanted to be here tonight. He is following this project quite closely and wants a transcript of this meeting. He is very concerned about this project.
>
> The format for this evening will be as follows: A brief technical presentation will be given by Mike Langenfus and then we will open it up to questions and comments. I will ask you to state your name so that we can get back to you if we can't answer your question this evening. If you haven't signed in, please do so before you leave. We have comment sheets and other information available tonight, please feel free to take that.

Mike Langenfus, Project supervisor for the Great Falls District, Helena headquarters.

> Project Background: I coordinate the various design projects for this district. This project has been on the board for a couple of years now. Back in December when we visited with you, we just had an idea where the alignment would go, and now we are back with a little more detail. At this time, we have done our preliminary design - we know where the limits of the job will reach. We have sent it to the right-of-way people and within the next month, they will be contacting you about acquiring new right-of-way. This project will be let around the year 2000, possibly toward late Spring. It involves the reconstruction of MT 200 and U.S. 89 between I-15 and the turn-off to Fairfield. It covers 12.2 kilometers (7.58 miles).
>
> Traffic Data: There are approx. 5,190 cars per day on this highway. These counts are important because they determine the thickness of the pavement as well as the future width of the road. This number is projected to increase to 9,370 vehicles per day within 20 years. We recognize that in 20 years, this area will demand a 4-lane roadway. We also found that because of all the turning

movements and all the residential build-up out here, it demands a left turn lane. Of this volume, 35% has been identified as trucks, with 8.4% being large trucks. Any time you have large trucks mixed in with the traffic, it demands a little more room. The traffic growth rate for this road is about 4% per year. The terrain is predominately low, so standards demand that we design for 110 kilometers per hours (70 mph). It is designed so that someone can drive safely at a 70 mph. In town the design will be for 60 kilometers per hour (35-37 mph). We will be installing culverts to replace older ones for drainage and irrigation water - both from one side of the road to the other and along the sides of the road. In some cases, we may install new culverts to lessen future problems.

Design: Our design has taken into account private property, especially residences, by trying to keep disruptions to a minimum. The new highway is about 40 meters (70-80 feet) across. The present highway is about 32 feet wide. So you can see that we have expanded the area a long ways from one side of the road to the other. The new highway will require a minimum of 42 feet more room on each side (from ditch to ditch) which makes a total of 84 feet more than there is presently. This will include wider ditches and flatter backslopes. All these features are mandated by our design standards to accommodate the very large volume of traffic that continues to be generated in this area.

The typical section consists of an 8-foot (2.4 meter) shoulder - that is a fairly large shoulder on each side. Four driving lanes at 3.6 meters (12 feet) - two in each direction, with a 4.2 meter (14 foot) turn lane in the middle. It will be a two-way left turn lane going all the way from the east end of Vaughn to the Sun River Junction. We have 6:1 backslopes off the edge of the pavement. Those are fairly flat so that if a car starts to leave the road, it is possible for them to recover and get back on. The wide shoulders gives the driver a feeling that they are not crowded, so hopefully the traffic will move a lot smoother through this area even with the increase in volume. Any fencing required will be installed as each landowner executes an agreement with our right-of-way department. You can help us tonight by letting us know how you feel about the project and giving us any comments you feel are necessary so that we can construct the project with the least possible adverse effect to you and to us.

The job has two brides - one over the BN and one over Muddy Creek at the beginning of the project. Both of these will be 4-lane structures. The turn lane will not start until we enter into Vaughn. Up to six school bus turnouts will be constructed at selected locations along the route west of Vaughn. These are being put in so that school children can be picked up and let off without disrupting through traffic - they can pull off and drop off/pick up kids without stopping traffic. We tried to accommodate the school crossing in town. This was kind of a tough one since the traffic volume is as high a it is and the roadway is a 5-lane, and there is no cross traffic. So you can't really put a signal in to stop traffic in one direction. The signals could not be warranted. Therefore, we have provided an underground tunnel at station 17+60 (west end of town). That is as close to the center of town as we could get because of the grade of the road isn't high enough to put a tunnel underneath it anywhere else.

Environmental Assessment: Carter & Burgess, Eng. will produce the Environmental Assessment for the project and the final document will identify all the significant environmental impacts for this project. The biologist out of Helena says that this is one of the cleanest projects we have as far as wetlands go. We are not affecting any large wetland areas with this project.

Grade: The grade of the highway will probably be close to the old one. No real high fill sections will be built. The deepest cut is about 4 meters (13 feet) deep in the Sand Hill area at about station 38. In areas where we need to cut, we lay in long backslopes so that the right-of-way and the construction limits extend way out. We are also putting retaining walls in this area to minimize right-of-way take. About 407,000 cm (.5 cubic yards) of dirt must be excavated and moved. The grades will essentially remain the same with some improvement for sight distance so passing will be a lot easier. You will be able to see cars coming in the other direction. There are very few horizontal curves but any that exist will be brought up to present standards. The project will use over 424 cubic meters (554,00 cubic yards) of gravel to build the riding surface. Hopefully the contractor will acquire this in and around this area.

Cost: The project will cost around $17 million. We originally thought we would build this project out of concrete which would have cost around $21 million. However, we felt the asphalt would meet our need for the highway and save us $5 million. The project is planed to be built as one large project, however, it could be split into two depending on available funding.

If any of you have any questions about the design, we will try and answer them or direct you to someone who can give you a satisfactory answer.

QUESTIONS AND/OR COMMENTS

① Jack Sanders: I own the Silver Spur Bar. Are you going to take about 12.5 feet on each side of the highway?

Answer: We are not taking anything from you.

Jack Sanders: What will that do to my right-of-way pertaining to my signs, etc. that I have on my boulevard? If I park a "For Rent" sign on it, will the state come and remove it? Am I going to lose that too?

Answer: You don't have anything in our right-of-way. We are building everything in our existing right-of-way in front of your property.

Jack Sanders: Isn't there a 25-foot boundary from the highway?

Answer: No.

Jack Sanders: I parked the sign on the boulevard closer to the highway and I was told to either remove it myself or they would remove it for me. There was some others who put their signs up and the state removed them.

Answer: They were probably on our right-of-way.

Dave Dreher: We don't have that information with us tonight, but we will get an answer back to you.

Jack Sanders: The point I'm making is that if you take 12.5 feet off the right-of-way and you move me back 25 more feet, then the bank will have their signs in the front yard. Do you know what I mean?

Dave Dreher: I know what you mean but we don't have an answer for you tonight. The indication we have is that in the general area where you are, we are going to be able to build within the right-of-way we already have. That means that nothing should be moved from what you have in place.

Jack Sanders: Unless you restrict the right-of-way field that you have now? It is very explicit - you can not park within 25 feet of the highway.

Dave Dreher: But that is within the right-of-way right now. If we are not taking anymore, then that should not change. We will find out for sure and get you an answer.

Jack Sanders: The millings that come off the highway - you paved all the way to the dumps from the county road all the way to the equestrian center and stop there. Would it be beneficial for the state to use that excess material to pave some of these people's residences who have boulevards that will be affected. What's up with that? Can a business owner or a private individual buy that at a low rate vs. paving a road? What are you going to do with all that recyclable material that our tax dollars paid to have removed from the highway? It goes to no one but the state and that's a double kick in the hind end as far as I'm concerned?

Answer: The material you see right now going out to the Elfisken Road is a public road. The Federal Highway Administration has agreed to allow us to use those millings on another public entity. We can not use them for private roads.

Jack Sanders: You guys are in bed together with the county and state and that's all there is to it. A private individual has nothing to do with that even though the private citizens' dollar pays to have that subcontracted out. You are going to make a deal with them with our money - pay them with our taxpayer's money - contract that job out to Empire Construction to rotomill that off the freeway and then you guys make a deal with the county to put it on a county road and that's ok? That is not ok!

Answer: What's wrong with that? It is a county road.

Jack Sanders: It's to benefit the state because you have the Indian Equestrian Center there. It's a tourist trap! That is the problem with the State of Montana - all you want to do is to make it a tourist industry state and let Montana labor work for $5.25/hour to pay for it and I think it is a crime! That's my opinion.

Dave Dreher: Let me explain that if it is going to a county road that is benefitting the taxpayers by saving them money that the county would otherwise be taxing them for. That is why it goes to a public entity. The county would have to tax you more if they had to pay for that material.

② Penny Bertelson: We have the Cottonwood Subdivision at #226 on the highway. Can you tell me how much you are taking away for that sand hill, and how wide it is going to be at the top?

Answer: That is at station 38 on the highway. About 20 meters (70 feet) from the center line of the highway.

Dave Dreher: If you have specific questions regarding a particular piece of property, we will stay and visit with you one-on-one for as long as it takes to get your questions answered after the meeting.

③ Unknown: If you are going to have that many bus stops, I would like to know if those kids are going to have to walk a mile down the road to reach the bus stop? You have seven bus stops and it is seven miles long.

Answer: We have identified six stops, and right now we have three on the left and one on the right. However, we haven't met with the school district to find out where we need to pick up all the kids. In the final analysis, we will have six stops. We can't put a bus stop along every approach to the road, so in some cases some kids may have to walk down to the bus stop. We will try to lengthen the bus stops out so cars can park in them also. The bus stop areas we've designed came from the school. We have been working as closely as we can with the school in order to make them as advantageous to as many people as possible.

④ Unknown: Are the bus stops going to be on both sides of the highway? Will the kids that live on the other side of the highway have to walk across that highway?

Dave Dreher: We have three on one side and one on the other at this point, so there will be some on both sides of the highway. Possibly some kids will have to walk across the highway.

⑤ Unknown: Is the state going to provide some voluntary retired people to make sure that those kids get across the highway safely like they do in Great Falls?

Dave Dreher: That program is worked through the school district not the State.

Answer: Those stops will not be the only places the bus will stop. There will still be road-side pickups in other areas where there is a smaller concentration of school-age children. In that case, they will stop and operate the flashing lights while the kids cross the road. We don't anticipate that those will be the only areas where the bus will stop. There will be other stops at residences that are isolated from the other stops. All that still has to be worked out with the school district. The law in Montana states that if they are stopping on the highway to pick up kids, the buses have to operate their lights to stop traffic. If they are picking them up off the road at a pull out, they don't have to use their lights.

⑥ Gene Ackerson: We were told that the buses would not be able to allow traffic to stop in both directions, is that the case?

Answer: Traffic will not have to stop at the turnouts. However, if there is an isolated instance where they are picking up one or two kids, they will stop, flash their lights, and traffic will have to stop in both directions while they are loading the kids. For the larger concentrations of children, we are using the school bus turnouts.

(7) Doug Mellon: When will you meet with the school districts?

Answer: We have an on-going dialogue with the school district. The designer will meet with them fairly soon.

Doug Mellon: Will that meeting be open to the public also? I can't see a kindergartener or first grader walking across 4-5 lanes of traffic to get on that bus. That is not going to work. You are going to have to go back and ask for more money for more turnouts or do something else. Three on one side and one/two on the other side will not work. There have been several occasions where people have not stopped for flashing lights on the bus - and that's with just two lanes of traffic. What will happen with four or five lanes? Something more has to be done.

Answer: We are meeting with the school district to try and identify places where school bus turnouts can be built that will handle the largest amount of children and maybe we can figure out a way where the children can be moved from one bus turnout to another without having to walk long distances so that we can accommodate everyone. It would probably be an isolated instance where we will actually service the school children on the roadway with 70 mph traffic.

Doug Mellon: I just want to know that there will be some public input on that too rather than just the school district and the state meeting. I feel that everybody up and down the road that has kids should be involved in making sure that there are safe pickups for the children. A kindergartner or 1st grader is not paying attention when they cross that road, or even walking down the long shoulder of the road. That is not a good deal, I don't think.

Dave Dreher: We will see what we can do to make that connection. Maybe it will involve a committee or something else, but we will try and work something out.

(8) Tom Murphy: Is it set in stone that you are going to have five lanes? At some time you said it could be cut down to three lanes - one lane going each direction and a turn lane.

Answer: We looked at that but capacity drove the five lanes. The capacity demands four lanes within the next 20 years, so we aren't going to invest $10-17 million on something that will have to be added onto down the road. It is a lot cheaper to do it now. That will be the last time we have to expand the highway in the area for a long time.

(a) Question: I'm concerned with the growth that you've expressed here. How does the school district know where the people are going to be living 20 years from now? How are they going to base that?

Answer: There is always room for expansion - especially turnouts. If you build six turnouts now and then the residential area starts building up in a place where there is no turnout, there is always the possibility of having another small project to add a turnout. It is a lot of easier to add a turnout than to build a whole road.

(a) Diane Conner: I'm real concerned with the kids crossing the roads. What is wrong with putting in stop lights just like in town? If we are suppose to be growing that drastically out here, we've got to have something to protect the kids out here.

Answer: Normally you see stop lights in a city. This is a federal route and normally when you have a federal route with five lanes of traffic going through an area, a traffic light to stop traffic is not warranted. It is a special consideration when you have a lot of kids crossing in this area and that is why we are building the turnouts. Most of the time we wouldn't consider putting in turnouts but because of the built-up residential area we are putting them in. We are hoping that we won't have kids crossing five lanes of traffic. If you build a roadway and kids want to get from one side of the road to the other, whether for a school bus or a rabbit, the kid will cross the road. We don't have control over that. We just try to build our roads with the highest possibilities for the safety of the kids.

Dave Dreher: Example: There seems to be a large group of homes in this area (showing map), so we put a turnout in this area. That would not preclude the bus from stopping here (showing map) where there is a single house to pick up a child. Just because there is a turnout here, doesn't mean they won't stop down here (showing map). It just means that at this turnout where they are picking up a large number of kids, they would be off the road and traffic could continue to move while they are picking up those children. Down here (showing map) traffic would have to stop because the bus would be stopping on the side of the road. We are not saying that the bus will only pick up children up at these turnouts. They will pick up children other places also. But where we have identified large groupings of children, that is where we will try to locate the turnouts.

⑪ Question: Are you still going to have flashing lights on the highway?

Dave Dreher: The flashing lights on the bus will stop traffic.

Question: No, I mean down here at the post office for example. There are a lot of kids out here running around and a lot of speeders out here. We in the neighborhood want to try and cut down on this kind of stuff. We've got to protect our kids! There are too many parents who have to work and can't be home 24 hours with their kids.

Dave Dreher: Gene, are we still putting up "school bus ahead" signs?

Question: Not only school bus, but all year around.

Dave Dreher: I don't believe we can do that because of regulations - we can't just put up lights wherever we want. They have to be warranted by a certain number of vehicles.

Comment: I believe she is talking about the flashing light out here. That is going to stay isn't it?

Mike Langenfus: I believe it is. The traffic people aren't here tonight because of a schedule conflict. We are looking at this and we realize there is a problem with kids crossing the road. We put the tunnel in and I realize that the tunnel is not as close to the center of town as everybody would like, but we can't protect them 100%. That's the way it is in most places - in the middle of Great Falls. We can't stop traffic everywhere we think kids are going to cross. We try to make it as safe as we possibly can and we will go as far as we can in this project to try and make it safe.

Answer: We are also building a bike path from 12th Street toward the east on the south side of the road going to the tunnel and then to the flashing light. The tunnel is right here (showing map - and explaining in detail).

⑫ Question: What dictates where you would put traffic lights and whether they would be flashing or red or stop and go? I remember in Great Falls and Black Eagle, the only time they got lights was after somebody was run over. Is that what we have to contend with here?

Answer: We are doing a traffic study right now.

⑬ Question: You are talking about major growth out here. If there wasn't going to be major growth, we wouldn't have this bank, the BP, and you wouldn't be expanding this highway. How will you in the future dictate where and when you will put up a traffic light - after a fatality or before?

Answer: In Great Falls, the City Commissioners meet with the highway department and put in a request. Then we study it and they come up with the funding. It is the same here but with the County Commissioners. You would have to work with the County Commissioners to try and get something like that through.

⑭ Question: So the community would have to get a petition together and challenge the County Commissioners in order to get a light up?

Answer: Yes, they would have to ask for a study.

Question: What period of time does that consume?

Answer: That depends on funding.

If you are going to signal an intersection, there has to be a certain amount of cross traffic in order to warrant that light. You can't just stop traffic in the middle of the road if there isn't a certain amount of cross traffic.

⑮ Question: Kids are going to cross the highway and as we grow and the number of children increase, are we going to have to have a fatality before the county will listen to us? It's happened in Great Falls, Black Eagle and all around Montana. I've seen the same scenario all my life. You have to have an accident before you come to the conclusion that you need a traffic light.

Answer: What happens sometimes is that a cluster of accidents is identified in a particular area by someone. Then they take a look at it to see if it warrants a signal. That is when the highway dept. comes in and does a study to verify whether it needs a light. That is dictated by regulation. That can trigger it or it can be triggered by someone going to the county and telling them that there is enough traffic in a certain area to need a signal whether there has been accidents there or not. The county can then in turn come to us and ask for a study to be done for a traffic signal. There are several ways to do that but it does need to come through the public entity - the county, the city, etc. The public entity has to come to us and request a study.

Question: Did you say you were increasing the speed limit through here to 70 mph?

⑯

Dave Dreher: No, we did not say that. The speed limit will stay where it is now. We have nothing to do with setting the speed limits. We design the roads to be maneuvered at a certain speed, but we don't set speed limits. The Legislature and the Highway Commission set the speed limit.

Question: The point I'm trying to make is that this is a $17 million project - what is this going to do to my property taxes? How is this project going to affect "joe citizen" as far as taxes go?

Answer: I'm not sure if it will increase your taxes at all. This is paid for by T-21 the new federal highway bill and 87% of it is paid for by the federal government. We pay a state match out of the amount of money we get every year from gas taxes, etc. that is appropriated towards roads. So this won't increase your taxes - I don't believe.

Dave Dreher: Most of this comes from state and federal gas taxes that you are already paying.

17 Darryl Bertleson: What is the time line for this project?

Answer: We feel we will have it ready for letting early in the year 2000. I'm not sure if it will take one season or two seasons to complete. It may be completed in the fall of 2000 or late summer of 2001.

18 Pat Hassell: I live at 890 Couch Avenue which is right off the highway. Are you saying that the current right-of-ways are not going to change all the way through Vaughn?

Answer: No. We can show you exactly what will change after the meeting. Just meet with us and we'll go over that. The right-of-way people have their own standards set for the distance they extend the right-of-way from the actual construction. A lot of times those are negotiable.

Ron Ely: 18 The hill that is right in front of the store that drops down to the BP, I understand you are going to make this more of a level grade for the sand hill right in front of the county store? Are you going to cut that hill down or are you going to build up to it? Not the sand hill itself, but down from there.

Answer: Federal guidelines state (inaudible).....

19 Tom Kroksen: I live on Couch Avenue. What type of alternate routes will there be through town? Will you be coming down Couch Avenue?

Answer: We are just going to use one lane. We will build half at a time and detour traffic to the other half. Since we are building four lanes, we will be able to handle two-way traffic on two of the lanes while we build on the other two. There will be traffic control, but they shouldn't be routed off the route.

Henry Gernsy: I'm from Vaughn. Concerning acquisition of right-of-way, I'm afraid a lot of these people will find that when the county/state gets done surveying, they will not own all the property the use now. They have been using state and county property for a long time and now they won't be able to use it anymore. My other comment is regarding kids on the highway. I'll bet that any day you go from here to the Big Sky turnoff, you'll see a kid zooming over the road with his motor bike or out in the middle of the road. So I don't know what the concern is about. To get rid of all the complaints about the school bus, etc. - just leave that two-lane road in there and move two lanes just north of town to get away from all of it. ⑳

Answer: We did look at that option. This project is costing $17 million as it is and the cost of the other is prohibitive. We are limiting access from the beginning of the project to just past the Cottonwood Estates. After that it is pretty much wide open because of all the approaches we have now. When you build a road like this it is difficult to control everything.

Henry Gernsy: If you want to put in stop lights etc. on a major highway you might as well forget the project. We've been fighting for a long time just to get a major highway as it is. ㉑

Bob Thompson: We have two of our Great Falls District Office Right-of-Way Agents and our Supervisor from Helena here tonight. If you have questions regarding how right-of-way will be acquired or how you'll be compensated, they can answer those questions after we're done. I believe Pat also has some informative brochures regarding right-of-way if anybody is interested in those. They would be more than happy to meet with you after we break.

CLOSING

Dave Dreher: I appreciate your coming tonight. We will be here as long as it takes to answer all your questions. We also have a hydraulics person here that can answer questions regarding irrigation or culverts.

The Vaughn to Sun River Junction project involves the proposed reconstruction of US 89 between I-15 and MT 200 the Sun River junction, approximately 7.58 miles.

Brief Update

After the public meeting held in December of 1997, the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) eliminated several of the alternatives based on alternative evaluation criteria and defined a Preferred Alternative (see next section).

On October 13, 1998 MDT held a second public meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss new details of the proposed project and gather public input so that the least possible adverse effects could be achieved.

Alternatives Advanced

Based on cost, environmental impacts, public input, and whether or not they met the Purpose and Need for the project (improved overall safety and reduced congestion) three alternatives were eliminated. The remaining alternatives are described below:

- **No Action:** This alternative would involve no improvements. US 89 would remain as it is today. A No-Action alternative must be included and analyzed for the Environmental Assessment.

- **Preferred Alternative:** This alternative is a four-lane facility (two lanes in each direction) from I-15 to the east side of Vaughn, blending to a four-lane facility with a two-way left turn lane (five lanes total) through the town of Vaughn and continuing to the Sun River junction.

Improvements

The Preferred Alternative includes several improvements to the existing conditions of US Highway 89:

- Widening to a four lane roadway
- Two-way left turn lane from east side of Vaughn to intersection of Montana 200 (totaling five lanes)
- Wider shoulders
- Several smaller-scale pull-outs to exit or board school busses
- An underground tunnel for safe pedestrian and bicyclist crossing of US 89
- Improved sight distance
- New culverts for drainage and irrigation water
- Bike path
- Replacement of bridge structures

What you said

The public open house meeting for the proposed US Highway 89 reconstruction was held at the Vaughn Multi-Purpose Room on October 13, 1998. Some of the concerns raised at the public meeting include:

- Right-of-way acquisitions and subsequent property purchase
- Location of school bus turnouts
- Safety of children crossing the road
- Location of traffic lights

Next steps

1. The Environmental Assessment (EA) will be completed and ready for public review in 1999. People on the mailing list will receive an announcement when the EA is available and a notice will be published in local newspapers.
2. The general public will have an opportunity to comment at a Public Hearing shortly after the EA is made available.
3. All comments, both agency and public will be recorded in a decision document.
4. Preliminary Engineering and Final Design will be completed with construction tentatively scheduled to begin in late spring 2000.

Give Us Feedback

**Let us know your thoughts about the proposed project by contacting Jeanette Lostracco, Project Manager, Carter & Burgess, 216 Sixteenth St Mall, Suite 1700, Denver, CO 80202.
(303) 820-4808, lostraccoj@c-b.com**

Fold here

Return Address:

____

____

____

Place
stamp
here

Jeanette Lostracco
Carter & Burgess, Inc.
216 16th Street Mall, Suite 1700
Denver, Colorado 80202

Fold here

MDT Public Meeting

We're Baaack!

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) invites you to a second public meeting to discuss the highway reconstruction project between Vaughn and Sun River. The intent of the project, designated Vaughn - Sun River, is to ultimately reconstruct a 12.2 kilometer (about 7.6 miles) section of Highway 200.

At the December, 1997 meeting MDT promised to return when we had more details, we're prepared to present some detail and continue discussion with the public. Constituents can come and get details about the proposed project and present their thoughts to the department.

Be Heard.

Your comments and concerns are a very important part of the process. We invite you to attend to voice suggestions and present pertinent information about the project. For more information, to comment, or to arrange special accomodations for disabilities please call the MDT District Office at (406) 727-4350 (TDD (800) 335-7592).

Tuesday, October 13, 7 pm
Vaughn School Multi-purpose Room
480 Central Avenue
Vaughn, Montana

Montana Department of Transportation

Public Meeting
Sign In Sheet

Project: Vaughn - Sun River
Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504
Date: October 13, 1998
Place: Vaughn School Multi-Purpose Room

Name *(Please Print)*	Address *(Please Print)*
Tom Cookson	255 Couch Ave. Vaughn, MT.
Gary A. Parker	50 Parker Ln. Ft. Shaw.
Ken Cutler	286 U.S. Hiway 89 Vaughn MT.
Perry Butcher	Box 444 Vaughn, Mt 59487
Nancy C Simmons	Box 341 Vaughn 59487
Doug & Kathy Ditch	354 US HWY 89
Dee Stetson	255 Highway 89
Andrew Carlsson	227 Hwy 89
Tom Murphy	705 Couch Ave
Ed Hassell	890 Couch Ave
Gene Ackerson	#1 4th St Vaughn

Montana Department of Transportation

Public Meeting
Sign In Sheet

Project: Vaughn - Sun River
Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504
Date: October 13, 1998
Place: Vaughn School Multi-Purpose Room

Name *(Please Print)*	**Address** *(Please Print)*
Doug MELAND	455 U.S. HIWAY 89 VAUGHN
LOLA MILTON	322 GOETZ RD SUN RIVER.
LEON HANSEN	716 Hwy 89 Vaughn
Germaine Bratcher	#2 Trail Lane Vaughn
Breeze Dilley	37 4Th STREET VAUGHN
Brian Dilley	37 4Th street VAUGHN
Jack Harlan	BOX 309 VAUGHN
Steve E Bratcher	#2 trail Lane VAUGHN
Larry Schott	Office Bar
Gary L. Curtis	Box 247 Vaughn Mt 59487
Diane Potter	Box 268 Vaughn 59487

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Montana Department of Transportation

Public Meeting
Sign In Sheet

Project: Vaughn - Sun River
Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504
Date: October 13, 1998
Place: Vaughn School Multi-Purpose Room

Name *(Please Print)*	**Address** *(Please Print)*
McCANN, MONTE	190 HWY 89 VAUGHN 59487
McCANN, LORRAINE	190 HWY 89 VAUGHN. 59487
Murray Hay	520 Central Vaughn mt 59487
Polly L. Carlstad	505 36th Ave NE Great Falls MT 5940
Caroline Bergen	Box 32 Dutton, MT 59433
Thelma Zeller	522 U.S. Hwy 89 Vaughn MT 59487
PATTY A DAVIDSON	P.O. Box 109 Sun River MT
Eileen Kotts	Bx 23 Sun River, Mt.
Kim Woldstad	First National Bank of Fairfield BOX 39 Vaughn MT
Barb Ayas	#1 Flora LANE VAUGHN, MONT 59487
Donald C Ayas	#1 Flora LANE VAUGHN 59487

(9)

Montana Department of Transportation

Public Meeting
Sign In Sheet

Project: Vaughn - Sun River
Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504
Date: October 13, 1998
Place: Vaughn School Multi-Purpose Room

Name *(Please Print)*	Address *(Please Print)*
Leonard Lundby	101 Manchester lateral Great FALLS, MT
James Offerdahl	197 Hiway 89 Vaughn MT
Dennis Dykstra	Box 1, Fortshaw mt
Misty Dykstra	Box 1, Fort Shaw, MT
G. A. Lewis	Box 2669 Grt Falls
Tom Stilley	5 Rocky Reef Rd Fort Shaw. MT
Ron Eli	600 Court Ave, Vaughn MT 59487
James L. Sowers	175 2nd St. Sun River 532 U.S. Hwy 89 Vaughn
Clyde Johnson	271 HWY 89 VAUGHN, MT. 59487

MDT

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Comment Form

Project: Vaughn - Sun River
Project Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504

You are invited to make your comments on this form and leave it with the meeting officials or take it with you and mail it to Gene Stettler, District Administrator, PO Box 1359, Great Falls, MT 59403-1359 by November 12, 1998.

Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest and comments on this project. Feel free to use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

NAME AND ADDRESS: Misty Dykstra
Box 1 Fort Shaw

COMMENTS: A very crappy job was done repaving the highway, When do you plan to repaint the lines, when you repaved, the snow plow ripped up the asphalt - why do you go to all of the expense to repave the road - but dont repaint the road??

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Comment Form

Project: Vaughn - Sun River
Project Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504

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Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest and comments on this project. Feel free to use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

NAME AND ADDRESS: James L. Sowers 532 U.S. Hwy 89 Vaughn 59487 (Purvis Dairy)

COMMENTS: How much additional right of way, if any, will be needed for the new road between station 80 & 90?

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Comment Form

Project: Vaughn - Sun River
Project Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504

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Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest and comments on this project. Feel free to use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

NAME AND ADDRESS: Doug & Kathy Ditch
354 US HWY 89, Vaughn, MT

COMMENTS:

We would like more information on the school bus situation.

ARTHUR CLYDE JOHNSON
TAMMY J JOHNSON
271 HWY 89
VAUGHN, MT. 59487

406 964-0052

10/13/98

Dear Sir,

My wife and I were worried because, we have yet to recieve anything in the mail concerning using the easement on our property at 271 HWY 89, for the new highway project.

I only learned of tonight's meeting by accident at church Sunday.

After getting hail damage and Ins check we learned of a 3rd party lien PHYLISS COLEMAN. Is this the case?

Or have we just not been sent any correspondance on the HWY, EASEMENT BUYOUT PROJECT?

Please let us know as we (own our house) and should be one's to make any decesion's.

Yours Sincerely
Clyde & Tammy Johnson

P.S. Could not go to meeting.

RECEIVED
FEB 1[illegible] 1998
Carter Burgess
Denver Colorado

Public Meeting Summary

Project Name: Vaughn - Sun River
Project Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504
Meeting Date: December 2, 1997 - 7 pm
Place: Vaughn School Multi-Purpose Room

Purpose:

This was an information meeting to exchange ideas with the public regarding the project.

Attendees:

See attached list.

Summary:

Dave Dreher opened the meeting with a general introduction of the project and our purpose in holding the meeting. He also explained the basic format — a short technical presentation by Mike Langenfus, District Road Design - Helena, followed by a question/answer and comment session.

Mike presented the engineering information regarding the project as well as some of the history and financial information. He used an aerial photograph and a four-lane typical section as visual aids.

Dave then opened the meeting to Q & A's and comments. Discussion generally focused on safety and the need for the project.

The primary recommendations from the audience included:

- considering some kind of crossing enhancement for pedestrians, ranging from a pedestrian overpass to striping and signal lights.
- considering a more restrictive speed limit.
- accelerating the project start.
- rerouting the road along the old railroad right-of-way north of town.

A quick straw poll was requested to see how many supported the project, nearly every hand was raised in support of the project as a four-lane road. A show of hands was requested for those in support of keeping the road a two-lane facility, only two hands were raised.

Another woman asked how many would support re-routing the road along the old railroad right-of-way north of town. Hers was the only hand raised.

The meeting ended with the general understanding the department would continue to pursue the road as presented, a four-lane facility.

Montana Department of Transportation

Public Meeting
Sign In Sheet

Project: Vaughn - Sun River
Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504
Date: December 2, 1997
Place: Vaughn School Multi-Purpose Room

Name (Please Print)	Address (Please Print)
Charles Mathews	P.O. Box 44 Sun River Mt.
Ray D. Davis	Box 207 Vaughn
Floyd Meland	455 U.S. Hwy 89 Vaughn
NORMAN GILLASPIE	111 LAURA LANE VAUGHN M.T.
Eugene & Emma Sendilly	PO Box 236, Vaughn, MT
Tom Stelly	5 Rocky Reef Rd Fort Shaw MT
FRED MAKER	P.O. Box 38 SIMMS, MT 59477
Donald A. Arps	# Flora Lane Vaughn 59487
Gail Arps	" " " "
Connie Mathews	Box 44 Sun River MT 59483
Penny Bertelsen	Box 444 Vaughn, MT 59487

Montana Department of Transportation

Public Meeting
Sign In Sheet

Project: Vaughn - Sun River
Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504
Date: December 2, 1997
Place: Vaughn School Multi-Purpose Room

Name *(Please Print)*	**Address** *(Please Print)*
Charlotte Irish	Box 308 Vaughn, Mt.
John + Thelma Zeller	522 U.S. Highway 89 Vaughn, MT 59487
JIM ESTHER	277 WASHINGTON BLVD GREAT FALLS MT 59404
HENRY GURNSEY	520 cetral Vaughn 59487
Nancy Simmons	BOX 341 Vaughn
Lee Stetson	255 Highway 89
Ruth Feathers	27 Dracut Hill Road
Wm J. Feathers	27 Dracut Hill Road
Gary & Esther Watte	1150 1st AVE
ANDREW CARLSSON	227 US Hwy 89
EARL + Judy Sheldon	445 Hwy 89

Montana Department of Transportation

Public Meeting
Sign In Sheet

Project: Vaughn - Sun River
Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504
Date: December 2, 1997
Place: Vaughn School Multi-Purpose Room

Name *(Please Print)*	**Address** *(Please Print)*
JOE TROPILA	209 - 22nd ST. NW GREAT FALLS MT 59404
Charles H. Penwell	#3 FIRST ST BOX 308 VAUGHAN MT 59487
Charles A. Penwell	3308 17th Ave. So, Great Falls
Doradene Robison Doradene Robison	50 Braden Lane, Vaughn
Ruth Mejia	203 Leistiko Rd - Sun River, Mont. 59483
Ina May W. E. Conly	P.O. Box 99 Sun River MT 59483
George Duffy	Vaughn, Mt.
Charlotte & Ray Allen	Vaughn, MT
Wayne Christensen Lyle Christensen	Vaughn Fort Shaw
Ken Cutler	Vaughn MT
Marilyn Roberts	Vaughn, Mt.

MDT

Montana Department of Transportation

Public Meeting
Sign In Sheet

Project: Vaughn - Sun River
Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504
Date: December 2, 1997
Place: Vaughn School Multi-Purpose Room

Name *(Please Print)*	Address *(Please Print)*
Cassutt, Richard & Joyce	Box 1418 Ft. Benton, 59442
Denise Curtis	1113 1 AVE Vaughn.
Virginia Stetson	255 Hwy 89 Vaughn
Lola Hansen Milton	PO 388 Vaughn MT
Ethel Parker	48 Parker Rd - Ft Shaw
BRETT HERZOG	LEWIS CONST P.O. BOX 2669 GREAT FALLS 59403
Don & Judy van der Hager	611 US Hwy 89 Vaughn
J B Wohlgemuth	105 - US Hwy 89 Vaugh
Gary S Parker	50 PARKER Ln. Ft. Shaw
Stevie [illegible]	PO Box 1782 Great Falls 59404
Mr. & Mrs Roy L. Curtis	1130 5th Ave Vaughn

Montana Department of Transportation

Public Meeting
Sign In Sheet

Project: Vaughn - Sun River
Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504
Date: December 2, 1997
Place: Vaughn School Multi-Purpose Room

Name (Please Print)	Address (Please Print)
Bill Lay	3712 - 5th Ave North G.F.
Ron Eli	600 Court Ave Vaughn MT. 59487
Terra J. Corocaddo	137 US Hwy 89 Vaughn MT 59487
Juliet Creedon	714 10th N. G.F.
Max & Kitty Henthorne	219 US Hwy 89
RM[illegible]	Vaughn Fire Dept.
CARL HACE	194 US Hwy 89 PO Box 232
Jim & Aileen Offerdahl	197 Highway 89 Vaughn, Mt
Dianne Potter	1130 3rd Ave Vaughn
Nils P Stokke	#475 Hwy 89 VAughN
Gary A. Jendresen	433 U.S. HWY 89 Vaughn

Kim Krause PO Box 39 Vaughn, MT 59487
Kim & Bill O'Haire P.O. Box 267 Vaughn, Mt 59487
Monty A Keogh 1110 5th Ave Vaughn MT. 59487

MDT

Montana Department of Transportation

Public Meeting
Sign In Sheet

Project: Vaughn - Sun River
Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504
Date: December 2, 1997
Place: Vaughn School Multi-Purpose Room

Name *(Please Print)*	Address *(Please Print)*
Jim + Phyllis Carpenter	2010 4th Ave NW GT Falls,
Cody Yeager	437 US Hwy 89
MARK DRAVES	410 1st AVE S.
KEN OLSEN	#58 STAR RTE VAUGHN
Paul + Dawn Thompson	#27 4th st Vaughn
J. T.	532 US Hwy 89, Vaughn
JAKE NEIL	GREAT FALLS
JOE MURPHY	GREAT FALLS
Karl Puckett	Great Falls Tribune
Leonard Lundby	Great Falls
Tom Murphy	705 Couch Ave Vaughn

PATTY DAVIDSON ←

Sonny Davidson - Box 109 Sun River, MT 59483

Ray V. Robison 165 Highwood Dr. Gt. Falls, Mt. 59404

Ken + Joy Campbell 201 Campbell Lane Vaughn, 59487

Will Ehnes P.O. Box 473 Vaughn 59487

Frank G. Hayes 946 County Line Rd Vaughn 59487

November 10, 1997

FIELD(1)

Subject: Public Meeting: Vaughn - Sun River Project

You are invited to a public meeting to discuss a highway project between Vaughn and Sun River. The meeting starts at 7 p.m., Tuesday, December 2 in the Multi-Purpose Room of the Vaughn School, 480 Central Avenue, Vaughn.

The intent of the project, designated Vaughn - Sun River, is to enhance safety and traffic flow on a 12.2 kilometer (about 7.6 miles) section of Highway 200.

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) intends to use the meeting to exchange ideas about the project with interested groups and individuals. Constituents can come and get details about the proposed project and present their thoughts to the Department.

The meeting is scheduled early in the project development process so the Department can gauge public interest in the project. Now is the time for you to get involved and let us know whether you have suggestions for, or any major objections to, the project.

To comment regarding the project, get more information about the project, or make special arrangements for disability accommodations for the meeting, please contact Gene Stettler, District Administrator, P.O. Box 1359, Great Falls, MT 59403-1359, (406) 727-4350; or Dave Dreher at the MDT Public Involvement Office, (406) 444-6245. For TTY or TDD users, the number is (800) 335-7592.

Carl S. Peil, P.E.
Preconstruction Engineer

CSP:ML:G:RD:121.dgm/1

Parcel Work File List

American Legion Post 130
424 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487

Lyle E. & Wanda C. Anderson
P.O. Box 123
Vaughn, MT 59487-0123

Donald C. & Barbara J. Arps
1 Flora Lane
Vaughn, MT 59487-9502

Clifford W. Berdar
% David K. Knudson
P.O. Box 1827
Great Falls, MT 59403-1827

Bergen Farms, Inc.
P.O. Box 32
Dutton, MT 59433-0032

Daryl E. & Penny O. Bertelsen
226 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487-9530

Steve Bratcher, et al.
P.O. Box 312
Vaughn, MT 59487-0312

Burlington Northern Property Taxes
777 Main Street, Basement 1206
Fort Worth, TX 76102-5300

Ervin L. & Vertie May Carlson
427 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487-9532

James W. & Phyllis M. Carpenter
2010 4th Avenue Southwest
Great Falls, MT 59404-2610

Lloyd E. & Marjorie B. Carter
% Roy & Denise Curtis
P.O. Box 416
Vaughn, MT 59487-0416

Cascade County Park Board
P.O. Box 2549
Great Falls, MT 59403-2549

Richard J. & Joyce Cassutt
P.O. Box 1418
Fort Benton, MT 59442-1418

Wayne M. Christensen
% Lyle & Elaine Christensen
819 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487

Gary J. & Kimberly A. Clark
467 U.S. Highway 89, No. P-3
Vaughn, MT 59487-9532

William W. & Ellen G. Clark
224 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487-9530

Robert & Connie Coil
792 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487-9535

Phyllis Colson
% Arthur C. & Tammy J. Johnson
271 U.S. Highway 89
Ulm, MT 59485

Coranellia M. Cutler
525 Cedar Avenue
Yukon, OK 73099-1213

Ken & Carolyn B. Cutler286 U.S.
Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487-9530

Joan N. Dalke and June Phillips
% Ervin Trebesch
P.O. Box 60
Vaughn, MT 59487-0060

Curtis Dear
P.O. Box 436
Vaughn, MT 59487-0436

Fred Dear
319 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487-9531

East Slope Cattle
% Indian Hammer Veterinary Service
P.O. Box 39
Vaughn, MT 59487-0039

Philip T. & Joan G. Eidel
211 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487-9530

Philip T. & Joan G. Eidel
% Cody J. & Clella L. Yeager
437 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487-9532

David J. & Gayle A. Eve
P.O. Box 437
Vaughn, MT 59487-0437

First National Bank of Fairfield
P.O. Box 9
Fairfield, MT 59436-0009

Evelyn M. Fish
% W. E. & Ina M. Corby
P.O. Box 89
Sun River, MT 59483-0089

Harry L. Flint
% Barter Island Radar Station
P.O. Box 108
Kaktovik, AK 99747-0108

Leon E. Hansen
P.O. Box 333
Vaughn, MT 59487-0333

Archie E. III & Donna M. Hassell
890 Couch Avenue
Vaughn, MT 59487-9741

Duane D. & Evelyn M. Havskjold
2 Fairway Lane
Vaughn, MT 59487-9501

Barry S. & Tammi G. Haynes
354 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487

Max W. & Katherine H. Henthorne
P.O. Box 203
Vaughn, MT 59487-0203

HSD Feedlot Corporation
P.O. Box 203
Vaughn, MT 59487-0203

Ralph L. Hunt
% Crystal K. Nash
711 8th Avenue North
Great Falls, MT 59401-1033

Gary A. Jendresen
433 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487

Monty A. Kemph Jr.
Monty A Kemph Sr.
1110 5th Avenue
Vaughn, MT 59487-9721

Joe & Nicki Kraft
P.O. Box 321
Vaughn, MT 59487-0321

Troy M. & Anita M. Kummer
HC 79 Box 438
Vaughn, MT 59487-9802

Gary A. Lewis
1025 11th Avenue North
Great Falls, MT 59401-1153

Greg & Janet Loftus
℅ Bob Greer
356 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487

Josef & Mary E. Martel
P.O. Box 175
Vaughn, MT 59487-0175

Lloyd O. & Anna L. Meland
455 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487-9532

Stewart L. & Doris E. Morrill
2107 5th Avenue South
Great Falls, MT 59405-2857

Ted Neuman
639 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487-9534

Logan J. Nielsen
P.O. Box 294
Vaughn, MT 59487-0294

William H. & Kimberly R. O'Haire
227 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487-9530

James & Aileen A. Offerdahl
197 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487-9756

Leon R. & Donna C. Olsen
HC 79 Box 58
Vaughn, MT 59487-9705

Charles H. Penwell
P.O. Box 308
Vaughn, MT 59487-0308

Wilbur B. Jr. & June A. Phillips
414 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487-9532

Lynn Poor Trust, et.al.
℅ Silver Spur Bar & Supper Club
P.O. Box 309
Vaughn, MT 59487-0309

Harold & Carmen Poulsen
P.O. Box 1376
Great Falls, MT 59403-1376

Gary L. & Teresa A. Pye
P.O. Box 141
Vaughn, MT 59487-0141

Philip G. & Carol J. Quimby
5150 East Craig Road, Trailer 39
Las Vegas, NV 89115-2283

Stanley Reeverts, et al.
P.O. Box 94
Vaughn, MT 59487-0094

Stephen Reeverts, et al.
824 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487-9536

Doradene E. Roberson
% Doradene Robison
50 Braden Lane
Vaughn, MT 59487-9504

Robert S. & Simone L. Roberson
2 Fauna Lane
Vaughn, MT 59487-9503

Walter E. & Julie A. Roberson
P.O. Box 83
Vaughn, MT 59487-0083

Frederick J. & Estella C. Rushton
% Howard E. & Jewell N. Taylor
259 Highway 200
Vaughn, MT 59487

Frederick J. & Estella C. Rushton
P.O. Box 303
Vaughn, MT 59487-0303

Hy H. & Deena A. Rushton
261 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487

James H. Rushton
% Ramona Ehnes
P.O. Box 602
Great Falls, MT 59403-0602

Sand Hill Ranch
P.O. Box 203
Vaughn, MT 59487-0203

Larry Schoot
128 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487

Marcia Shanahan
99 Stevenson Road
Fort Shaw, MT 59443-9724

Earl D. & Judy A. Sheldon
445 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487-9532

Harry Sherrod
% R Bar S Properties
200 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487-9530

William H. & Nancy Simmes
P.O. Box 361
Vaughn, MT 59487-0361

Harvey W. & Renea Simpson
201 Campbell Avenue
Vaughn, MT 59487-9753

Patricia Skow
% Gary R. Asich
4 Woburn Lane
Great Falls, MT 59404-6327

James L. & Ruth E. Sowers
P.O. Box 34
Sun River, MT 59483-0034

Leland E. & Virginia F. Stetson
HC 79 Box 32
Vaughn, MT 59487-9703

Nils P. & Athlene B. Stokke
475 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487

Eugene & Joy Suek
845 Couch Avenue
Vaughn, MT 59487-9741

Gorham E. & Chandler A. Swanberg
P.O. Box 2567
Great Falls, MT 59403-2567

George R. Thompson
% NCI Tech CO LLC
P.O. Box 6350
Great Falls, MT 59406-6350

George R. Thompson
P.O. Box 191
Vaughn, MT 59487-0191

Patricia G. Tribby
% William L. Henderson
P.O. Box 12
Black Eagle, MT 59414-0012

Patricia G. Tribby
P.O. Box 63
Vaughn, MT 59487-0063

Ross W. Tribby & David B. Tribby
P.O. Box 63
Vaughn, MT 59487-0063

Valley Country Store, Inc.
133 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487-9756

Donald D. & Judy Vanderhagen
611 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487-9534

Vaughan Truck Stop Corporation
P.O. Box 14682
Spokane, WA 99214-0682

Joyce G. Wohlgemuth
Helena F. Wohlgemuth
P.O. Box 9
Vaughn, MT 59487-0009

William J. & Alice R. Wood
P.O. Box 167
Vaughn, MT 59487-0167

Zeller Trust
522 U.S. Highway 89
Vaughn, MT 59487-9533

ML:G:RD:121.lst

Ad in papers in these towns!

Choteau

Fairfield

Great Falls

Public Meeting

Hear.

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) invites you to a public meeting to discuss a highway project between Vaughn and Sun River. The intent of the project, designated Vaughn - Sun River, is to ultimately reconstruct a 12.2 kilometer (about 7.6 miles) section of Highway 200.

MDT intends to use the meeting to exchange ideas about the project with interested groups and individuals. Constituents can come and get details about the proposed project and present their thoughts to the department.

The meeting is scheduled early in the project development process so the department can gage public interest in, and support for, the project. Now is the time for the public to get involved and let us know if they have major objections to, or support for, the project.

Be Heard.

Your comments and concerns are a very important part of the process. We invite you to attend to voice suggestions and present pertinent information about the project. For more information or to arrange special accomodations for disabilities please call the MDT District Office at (406) 727-4350 (TDD (800) 335-7592).

Tuesday, December 2, 7 pm
Vaughn School Multi-purpose Room
480 Central Avenue
Vaughn, Montana

MDT

Montana Department
of Transportation

Transmittal Slip

To: DAVE DREHER

From: G STETTLER

Date: 1/7/98

Subject: VAUGHN - SUN RIVER

☐ Per our phone conversation
☐ Prepare reply for my signature
☐ Please sign and return this
☐ Respond under your signature
☐ Please call me about this
☐ Please review and return

☐ Urgent
☒ For your information
☐ Per your request
☐ For your files
☐ For your approval
☐ Please take care of this

Remarks: DAVE, I JUST RETURNED FROM THE PROJECT. I CAN'T FIGURE OUT WHAT MR. PARKER IS TALKING ABOUT IN HIS LAST PARAGRAPH - THE WEST END OF THE PROJECT, ETC. MAYBE DENNIS RAY CAN FIGURE IT OUT. I'LL HAVE HIM LOOK AT IT. MAYBE WE CAN MAKE MINOR CHANGES W/ THE ~~STRIPING~~. STRIPING.

Stock No. 3255-0747

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Comment Form

Project: Vaughn - Sun River
Project Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504

You are invited to make your comments on this form and leave it with the meeting officials or take it with you and mail it to Gene Stettler, District Administrator, PO Box 1359, Great Falls, MT 59403-1359 by January 5, 1998.

Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest and comments on this project. Feel free to use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

NAME AND ADDRESS: Gary A Parker
50 Parker Ln Ft Shaw, Mt. 59443-

COMMENTS:

I am very much in support of the rebuild project of Hiway 200 from Vaughn to Sun River. I feel that the proposed 5 lane profile is a minimum. My wife Marilyn commutes to Gt Fls daily and this stretch of road is not safe by any means. Moving farm machinery is very difficult and dangerous. I served on the valley school board for 14 years and we had numerous minor accidents plus several close calls.

At the west end of the project where 200 + 89 meet something should be done so the east bound traffic on 200 does not have to [illegible] pull left toward the west bound lane then correct to the right then left again and the common driving pattern on the road -

over

shows that traffic would like to travel this way but the rumble strip avoids it.

thank you for
your consideration

Gary Parker

'98 JAN 7 AM 10 05

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Comment Form

Project: Vaughn - Sun River
Project Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504

...T OF TRANSPORTATION
GREAT FALLS
'97 DEC 17 AM 8 39

You are invited to make your comments on this form and leave it with the meeting officials or take it with you and mail it to Gene Stettler, District Administrator, PO Box 1359, Great Falls, MT 59403-1359 by January 5, 1998.

Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest and comments on this project. Feel free to use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

NAME AND ADDRESS: Dawn + Paul Thompson
#27 4th St. Box 211 Vaughn Mt 59487

COMMENTS: As residents of Vaughn we have to live with this "majoR" highway going thru our town. Our children need to be able to get from one side to the other safely. That is going to make a "crossing" a must. Either over with an overpass. (The ones that we have passed in our travels are completly covered with fencing so nothing can be thrown over, with a spiral ramp that is handicap accesible) OR by going under the highway. This would need to be big enough that you can walk through it Comfortably or ride a bicycle through. A SPEED LIMIT must remain in place 45 is the **maximum**. (even 10th Ave So in Gt Falls has a 35 mph) With the possiblity of a stoplight at the intersection of 4th St and Hwy 200/89.

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Comment Form

Project: Vaughn - Sun River
Project Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504

You are invited to make your comments on this form and leave it with the meeting officials or take it with you and mail it to Gene Stettler, District Administrator, PO Box 1359, Great Falls, MT 59403-1359 by January 5, 1998.

Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest and comments on this project. Feel free to use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

NAME AND ADDRESS: Ethel Parker
48 Parker Road, Ft Shaw, Mt. 59443

COMMENTS:

It would be wonderful if the project could be in the works now — I know it is going to take awhile —

I'm very much in favor of the 5-lane plan — I am 74 and don't like coming home after dark on that stretch between Vaughn & Sun River -

I say: Hurry Up!

97 DEC 9 AM 8 59

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Comment Form

Project: Vaughn - Sun River
Project Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504

You are invited to make your comments on this form and leave it with the meeting officials or take it with you and mail it to Gene Stettler, District Administrator, PO Box 1359, Great Falls, MT 59403-1359 by January 5, 1998.

Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest and comments on this project. Feel free to use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

NAME AND ADDRESS: Ruth Nina Merja

203 Leistiko Road Sun River Mont. 59483-9741

COMMENTS: I drive this road twice a week and know the type of traffic that comes down the Valley. I don't see how four or five lanes will make it safer. In stead it will magnify the problem. Putting two lanes one fourth to one half mile north of the present Highway for the 75 to 100 mile an hour traffic would serve the Valley better. This Highway would be easier to build- no traffic hold ups, no need to watch for electric and telephone wires. No problem with irrigation ditches or culverts. As a no access Highway there would be no problem with off and on traffic. If you are looking 20 years in the future this option needs to be considered.

As it is and will be in the future Highway 200 already has incompatible traffic. Some of the older drivers are going 45 miles an hour with younger ones going up to 100 miles an hour.

Highway 200 from Sun River to Vaughn should have a speed limit of 55 miles an hour, because of the buses and on and off side traffic.

Drive it yourself at different times during the day, follow a school bus either on pick up or delivery. It's the only way to see the problems.

Ruth Merja

97 DEC 8 AM 7 07
GREAT FALLS

PHIL T. EIDEL RANCH
VAUGHN, MONTANA 59487
PHONE 965-3267

[illegible] DEPARTMENT
OF TRANSPORTATION
GREAT FALLS
'97 DEC 4 AM 8 45

DECEMBER 1, 1997

DEAR MR. STETTLER,

WE HAVE LIVED ON THIS MISERABLE HWY 89 FOR 39 YEARS AND WE DEFINITLY FEEL FOUR LANES IS THE ONLY WAY TO GO FOR SAFETY SAKE.

WE ALSO FEEL THAT THERE SHOULD BE A SPEED LIMIT FROM VAUGHN TO THE FAIRFIELD TURN OFF.

THANK YOU!

SINCERELY,

Joan & Phil Eidel

THE EIDEL'S

FALLS
'97 DEC 4 AM 8 43

December 1, 1997

Gene Stettler
P.O. Box 1359
Great Falls, MT 59403

Dear Mr. Stettler:

I am compelled to write this input letter after reading the article in the Great Falls Tribune dated December 1, 1997. My spouse and I live near Simms and we both commute to Great Falls daily to work. The Vaughn to Sun River road improvement project will impact us directly.

For the record, "we" are most definitely in favor of a four lane with a center turn lane as a solution.

We would also like to comment on some of our observations:

The Future

In the Tribune article we noticed the current traffic count is 5,190, projected to be 5,610 by the year 2000 and a minimum of 5 years to complete the project, (is that 5 years from now or after the start date of construction?) If construction does not start until the year 2001 we could be to 2005 or 2006 for a completion date! What are the traffic count projections for 2006 and beyond? If, as your comments suggest four lanes plus a turn lane is justified now with our current traffic count what will be justified for the Vaughn to Sun River stretch of highway 200 ten years from now? We feel nothing less that four lanes plus a turn lane should even be considered. Keep in mind that far more migration is headed West of Great Falls than any other direction. Also, the recent influx of new business (Conoco gas station, Bank, Equestrian center, Vet Clinic, and two new subdivisions) along with increased traffic from two gravel yards, Valley Grocery, Trailer Sales and Indian Hammer Vet Clinic demand four plus lanes. We also feel the improved highway will encourage more business and migration, making four lanes plus necessary.

Current Problems

We have experienced several near misses (accidents) and have come upon a number of accidents. We feel the two blind curves (just East of Carlson's Trailer Sales and just West of Indian Hammer Vet Clinic) should be double yellow lines now. These two areas seem to have those head on fatality accidents. If you drive this stretch often in all weather and light conditions you can see why. The biggest problem we've encountered is with all the driveways that come out directly onto the highway. We've been in a legal passing situation and had people come out into our lane (head on) from a driveway. For example they come out to go to Great Falls from the South side. Since they are only pulling into a lane and not crossing a lane while making their right turn they only look left to see that no one is coming in their lane in their direction. They do not stop and they do not look both ways and they pop out into the East bound lane and they end up looking head on at me as I am along side a semi going West in their East bound lane. Surprise! Surprise!

Commerce

Your comments about commercial traffic were right on. Also, keep in mind this is a major State East/West highway that connects Great Falls to Missoula with many recreational locations in between with spring fishing, summer camping, fall hunting and winter snowmobiling. Many college students and business with Great Falls/Missoula connections use this highway. It is not unusual to follow County 4 plates East bound in the mornings and West bound in the evenings. Now that we have written this letter, we are becoming more anxious to see the construction begin.

Thank you for caring enough to solicit comments and for taking the time to read them.

Sincerely,

John N. Virgin
Sharon Virgin

John and Sharon Virgin
P.O. Box 81
Simms, MT 59477
(406) 264-5894

YEAGER'S C-BAR
◆ **ENTERPRISES** ◆
437 US Hwy 89 South • Vaughn, MT 59487
(406) 965-2582

December 2, 1997

I am writing to express my opinion on the reconstruction
that is being discussed on US Hwy 89. My family + I have a feedlot
that sits just west of Vaughn on the highway. My feelings are strongly
focused on the idea of constructing a four lane versus a two lane highway
with a turning lane. The reasoning for my decision is that there are always
cattle, grain, + hay trucks coming in + out of the feedlot, and a four lane highway
would clearly make more sense, beings there is a constant flow of trucks on Hwy 89.
I also feel that the safety of the four lane over a two lane is much greater.

Last but surely not least, my biggest concern is the time + dollars.
If a two lane highway is constructed now, with as much traffic as there is
traveling Hwy 89, just exactly how long is it going to be before a four lane
highway is going to have to replace the two lane highway. Constucting the
four lane would clearly be the most common sense route to take. Thank
you for taking the time to evaluate my opinion + I expect the best of decisions
to be made beings as not only mine but many others tax dollars is
what is making this project possible.

Sincerely,

Cody Yeager

ABC Bull Development Center

Dec. 2, 1997

To whom it may concern:

I deliver mail six days a week up the valley.

This highway is very dangerous. I have seen many near accident, and am suprised more people have not been killed.

I would like to see a four lane highway, if not atleast widened with turnouts.

Please advise me how it will affect the mailroute, accessability to boxes, time delays, and will the boxes have to be moved.

Thank you,

Edna (Pat) Wohlgemuth
226 N. Frontage Rd.
Vaughn, Mt. 59487

[illegible] DEPT
OF TRANSPORTATION
GREAT FALLS

'97 DEC 2 AM 10 09

December 1, 1997

Mr. Gene Stettler, District Manager
Montana Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 1359
Great Falls, MT 59403

Dear Mr. Stettler:

We are a landowner that borders on both sides of the Vaughn-Sun River Highway.

We are concerned regarding the irrigation ditches that run under this highway to take water from the north side to the south side.

We are also concerned about the concrete irrigation ditches that run parallel to the highway. We wonder how much right of way the highway will need and whether this will interfere with our concrete ditches.

Obviously, we commend your efforts to make this a safer highway. In addition, we hope you will be able to address our concerns during this critical planning phase of your project.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Polly Bergen Carlstad

Polly Bergen Carlstad, Secretary
Bergen Farms Incorporated
Box 32
Dutton, MT 59433

INF	GT FALLS DISTRICT	DIS
	District Engineer	
	Personnel Specialist	
	Const. Suprv.	
	Eng. Prj. Mgrs.	
	Eng. Officer	
	Eng. Serv. Suprv.	
	R/W	
	Design	
	Lab	
	Traffic	
	Utilities	
	Centralized Serv. Suprv.	
	Accounting Spec.	
	Admin. Asst. H	
	Chief, FMB GF H	
	Maint. Supts. GF H	
	Shop. Supts. GF H	
	Section Suprvs. GF H	
	File	

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Comment Form

Project: Vaughn - Sun River
Project Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504

You are invited to make your comments on this form and leave it with the meeting officials or take it with you and mail it to Gene Stettler, District Administrator, PO Box 1359, Great Falls, MT 59403-1359 by January 5, 1998.

Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest and comments on this project. Feel free to use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

NAME AND ADDRESS: Ken OLSEN #58 STAR RtE
VAUGHN Mt.

COMMENTS: My FIRST CONCERN is How this NEW HWy will effect the (OPEN RANGE LAW) 2nd why not Build A 5 LANE HWy ON the old MILWAUKEE RR & By Pass the VAughN HWy #89 All the WAY to US 200.

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Comment Form

Project: Vaughn - Sun River
Project Number: F 3-1(9)2
Control Number: 1504

You are invited to make your comments on this form and leave it with the meeting officials or take it with you and mail it to Gene Stettler, District Administrator, PO Box 1359, Great Falls, MT 59403-1359 by January 5, 1998.

Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest and comments on this project. Feel free to use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

NAME AND ADDRESS: JAKE NELL
Vaughn BP STATION

COMMENTS:

1. I WOULD LIKE to SEE SOME CONSIDERATION for MEDIAN beautification or LANDSCAPING At Least in Vaughn - If it can be funded on KALISPELL/Whitefish, why not here -

2. You are proposing 8 month construction schedule?

MEMORANDUM

To: Transportation Department

From: Fred Maker, Superintendent Sun River Valley School Dist
PO Box 38 Simms Mt
264-5111

Subject: Proposed highway rejuvenation

Date: December 1, 1997

The Sun River Valley School District would offer the following information regarding the proposed rejuvenation of highway 200.

- Between Vaughn and the turn off onto highway 89 the District picks up thirty-two students between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 8:15 a.m., drops off the same amount between 3:40pm and 4:30 pm.
- Eleven stops are necessary to accommodate those 32 students.
- We load from one to six children on a stop.
- Grade range is from kindergarten through seniors in high school.
- An activity bus runs between 5pm and 6pm with riders changing according to activity schedule.

Bus stops highway 200 between Vaughn and highway 89

- Bottom East Sand Hill two students
- Crest of Sand Hill one student
- .25 miles west of Thompsons four students
- 1 mile west of Thompsons two students
- 1.3 miles west of Thompsons three students
- 1.7 miles west of Thompsons two students
- 2.1 miles west of Thompsons five students
- 2.5 miles west of Thompsons four students
- 2.8 miles west of Thompsons three students
- 4.3 miles west of Thompsons six students
- Demographics will change in the next two to five years affecting bus stops

Preliminary concerns over proposed new highway and construction

- Because of the vastness of the District boundaries, time is an important component in our transportation system, especially, in the morning. With construction we are concerned about the loss of time and scheduling impact.
- At this time we have no opinion on the safety factor going from a two-lane road to a four-lane road. We would hope that the department would seek our opinion regarding safety as the process continues.

■

Barbara Curtis
1130 5th Ave. Big Sky Vista
Vaughn, MT

December 1, 1997

Gene Stettler
Great Falls District Administrator
Montana Deaprtment of Transportation

Dear Mr. Stettler,

There and 75 homes in the area in and around Big Sky Vista immediately Southwest of Vaughn. Most of those people use 12th Street to enter and exit Highway 200. Children catch and get off the sports bus there on their way to or from Simms High also.

We will need turn lanes there whether the highway is made wider or if is is made 4-lanes.

There have been many 'near misses' when vehicles coming from the West fail to slow down to the posted 45 miles per hour and vehicles coming from the East pass soon after the Valley Country Store even though there is a solid double line and the speed is still supposed to be 45 until after the 12th Street turn.

Another 45 mph sign should be posted as people turn West back unto the highway from the Valley Country Store and also a DO NOT PASS sign midway between there and the 12th Street turn.

I would recommend at least one set of the warning ruts (?) just before the 45 mph sign West of 12th Street like they put in at Bowman's Corner, to get their attention to slow down.

Please seriously study and consider these problems before there is a fatal accident!

Barbara E. Curtis

US Highway 89
Vaughn to Sun River Junction
ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT

Newsletter
August 1998

The Proposed Project

This proposed project begins at I-15 and ends at the Sun River Junction. Two structures on the project include the Burlington Northern overpass bridge and the bridge over Muddy Creek. The intent of this project is to reconstruct the roadway to improve the safety and physical conditions of the road.

We Heard You

The public open house for the proposed improvement of US Highway 89 was held on December 7, 1997 at the Vaughn School Multi-Purpose Room. The purpose of this scoping meeting was to introduce the project and obtain initial public input on:

- Ways to enhance safety and traffic flow on US Highway 89.
- Exchange ideas about the project with interested groups and individuals.

What You Said

Concerns expressed at this meeting include:

- Concern over number of driveways that access the highway directly causing accident hazards.
- Poorly located school bus stops.
- "Trouble spots" which present recurring problems to drivers.

The recommendations from this meeting include:

- Consider some kind of crossing enhancement for pedestrians, including improved striping and signal lights.
- Consider a more restrictive speed limit.
- Two blind curves (east of Carlson's Trailer Sales and west of Indian Hammer Vet Clinic) should have a double yellow line.

Alternatives Considered

- Widening to four lanes, with five lanes through Vaughn.
- Adding a center turn-lane to the existing two-lane facility.
- Wider two-lane facility with wider shoulders.
- Four-lane divided facility with frontage roads.
- No Build, or "do nothing."

Highlights of the Proposed Project

The following is a summary of improvements that are being considered for the project:

- Truck, bus, and mailbox turnouts.
- Improved sight distance (eliminating dips).
- Widened shoulders.
- Left-turn bays.
- Updated guardrails.
- Proposed bike path.

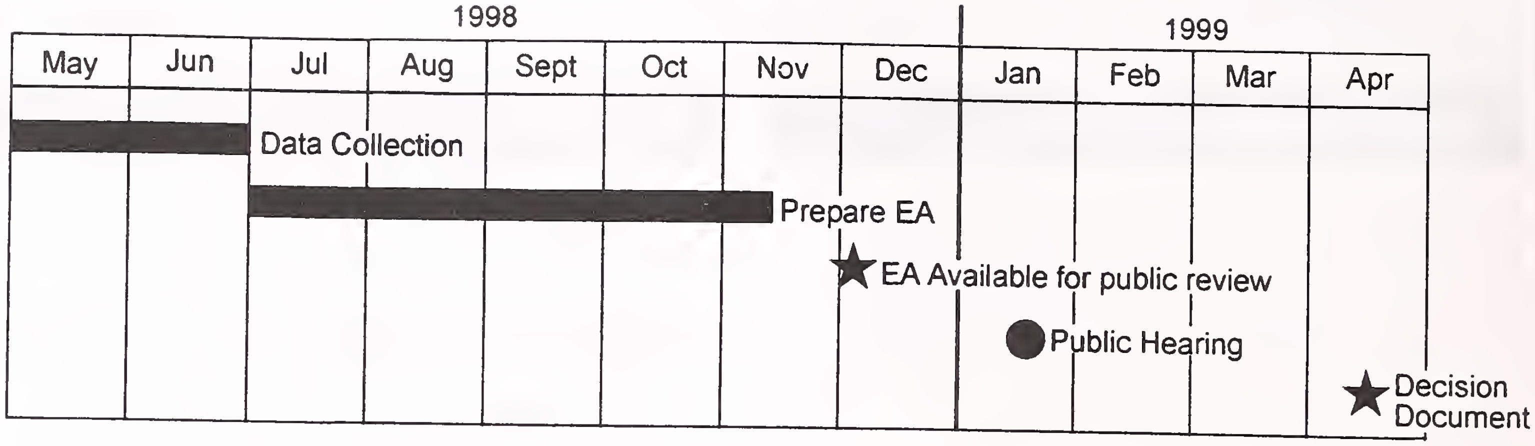
Next Steps

An Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared to analyze impacts of the proposed project. Availability of the EA, scheduled for December 1998, will be announced in the *Fairfield Times* and *Great Falls Tribune* newspapers and a newsletter. A public hearing will then be held to receive comments on the EA (see schedule on back).

What is Your Point of View?

Let us know your thoughts about the proposed project. You can call Jeanette Lostracco at Carter & Burgess, Inc. at 303/820-4808.

Project Schedule



Jeanette Lostracco
Carter & Burgess, Inc.
216 16th Street Mall, Suite 1700
Denver, CO 80202

To:

Appendix C

4(f) Programmatic Evaluations

MONTANA DIVISION

"NATIONWIDE" *SECTION 4(f)* EVALUATION

FOR MINOR USAGE OF

PUBLIC PARKS, RECREATION LANDS, AND WILDLIFE AND WATERFOWL REFUGES

Project # NH 3-1(9)0 (Control # 1504)

Date: March, 1999

Project Name: Vaughn-Sun River

Vaughn Park

Location: Cascade County

NOTE: *Any response in a box requires additional information. Consult the "Nationwide" Section 4(f) Evaluation criteria.*

	YES	**NO**
1. Is the *4(f)* site adjacent to the existing highway?	X	☐
2. Does the amount and location of the proposed impact area impair the use of the remaining *Section 4(f)* land for its intended purpose?	☐	X
3. Does the proposed project require more than a minor amount* of the *Section 4(f)* site for Right-of-Way?	☐	X
4. Are there any proximity impacts which would impair the use of the *4(f)* lands for their intended purpose (defined as "constructive use")?	☐	X
5. Have the officials with jurisdiction over the property agreed in writing with the assessment of impacts and the proposed mitigation? ***Note: Correspondence with Cascade County is in process***	_	☒
6. Have Federal funds — such as the *National Land & Water Conservation Fund - Section 6(f)* — been used for the acquisition of, or improvements to the *4(f)* site?	☐	X
If yes — has the land conversion/transfer been coordinated with the appropriate Federal agency, (12) (name) —	_	☐
and are they in agreement?	_	☐
7. Is the proposed action under an Environmental Impact Statement (E.I.S.)?	☐	X
8. Is the proposed project on a new location?	☐	X
9. The Scope-of-Work for the proposed project is one of the following:	X	☐

a) Improved traffic operation;
b) Safety improvements;
c) 3R;
d) Bridge replacement on essentially the same alignment; or
e) Addition of lanes.

---

*NOTE: MDT's guidelines for "minor amounts" of Right-of-Way (including Construction Permits) are limited to either 10% of a parcel under 10 hectares (25 acres), or 1% of a parcel equal to or greater than 10 hectares (25 acres) in size.

NOTE: *Any response in a box requires additional information. Consult the "NATIONWIDE" SECTION 4(F) EVALUATION criteria.*

	YES	NO
ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED		
1. The "do-nothing" **ALTERNATIVE** has been evaluated, and is not considered to be feasible and prudent. ***This alternative does not meet the purpose and need to correct the structurally deficient conditions and may result in potential injury including loss of life. Safety conditions would continue to deteriorate.***	X	☐
2. An **ALTERNATIVE** has been evaluated which improves the highway without any *4(f)* impacts, and is also not considered to be feasible and prudent. ***An alternative to use a retaining wall was considered but was not considered feasible because it would not meet design criteria and would result in inadequate drainage.***	X	☐
3. An **ALTERNATIVE** on a new location avoiding the *4(f)* site has been evaluated, and is not considered to be feasible and prudent. ***While an alternative location may avoid impact to Section 4(f) properties, it was not considered feasible and prudent. An alternative location would substantially increase construction cost and would result in excessive environmental and/or economic impacts.***	X	☐
Descriptions of **ALTERNATIVES 2**. and **3**. are attached. *Descriptions are detailed above.*	X	☐
MINIMIZATION OF HARM		
1. The proposed project includes all possible planning to minimize harm.	X	☐
2. Measures to minimize harm include the following:		
a) Replacement of the lands used with lands of reasonably equivalent usefulness and location, and of at least comparable value.		X
b) Replacement of facilities impacted including sidewalks, paths, benches, lights, trees, and other facilities.		X
c) Restoration/landscaping of disturbed areas. ***Filling existing ditch***	X	
d) Special design features.		X
e) Payment of, or improvements to the remaining *4(f)* lands equal in cost to fair market value.		X
f) Other measures. ***Construction of a pedestrian/bicycle path on north side of highway would cross to south side, just west of Vaughn Park, thereby improving access to park.***	X	
COORDINATION		
1. The proposed project has been coordinated with the Federal, state, and/or local officials having jurisdiction over the *4(f)* lands. List: ***Cascade County Park Board (letter sent in April, 1999)***	X	☐

2) In the case of non-federal *4(f)* lands, the official with jurisdiction has been asked to identify any Federal encumbrances — and none exist. N/A ☐

3) Coordination with the U.S. ARMY - Corps of Engineers has been completed, or a *Section 404* Permit (if applicable) is pending. N/A ☐

SUMMARY AND APPROVAL

The proposed project meets all criteria under the "Nationwide Programmatic" *Section 4(f)* Evaluation approved on December 23, 1986, and is submitted pursuant to **49 U.S.C. 303**.

All required alternatives have been evaluated, and the findings made are clearly applicable to this proposed project.

---+-This Programmatic Evaluation includes all possible planning to minimize harm which will be incorporated in this proposed project.

Barry Bresten

Barry C. Bresten
Acting Engineering Bureau Chief
Environmental Services

Date: 1/26/2000

Approved:
Federal Highway Administration

Date: 2-8-2000

"ALTERNATIVE ACCESSIBLE FORMATS OF THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE PROVIDED ON REQUEST"

JMM:BCB:jl

MONTANA DIVISION

"NATIONWIDE" *SECTION 4(f)* EVALUATION FOR MINOR IMPACTS ON HISTORIC SITES EXCLUDING HISTORIC BRIDGE REPLACEMENTS

Project # NH 3 -1(9)0 (Control #1504)
Date: March, 1999
Project Name: Vaughn – Sun River
Location: Cascade County
Trees associated with sites Ford Ranch (24CA361) and Murray Farmstead (24CA363)

NOTE: *Any response in a box requires additional information. Consult the "Nationwide" Section 4(f) Evaluation criteria.*

		YES	**NO**
1.	Is the *4(f)* site adjacent to the existing highway?	X	☐
2.	Does the proposed project require the removal or alteration of historic structures, and/or objects? [1] ***Since it is necessary to remove several trees on two eligible sites for the National Register for Historic Places, the appropriate number of trees will be replaced with new trees outside the proposed new right-of-way boundary for the two sites.***	☒[1]	_
3.	Does the proposed project disturb or remove archaeological resources which are important to preserve in-place rather than to recover?	☐	X
4.	Is the impact on the *4(f)* site considered minor (i.e.: no effect; or no adverse effect)?	X	☐
5.	Has the STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE (SHPO) agreed in writing with the assessment of impacts, and the proposed mitigation?	X	☐
6.	Is the proposed action under an Environmental Impact Statement (E.I.S.)?	☐	X
7.	Is the proposed project on a new location?	☐	X
8.	The Scope-of-Work for the proposed project is one of the following: a) Improved traffic operation; b) Safety improvements; c) 3R; d) Bridge replacement on essentially the same alignment; or e) Addition of lanes.	X	☐

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

1.	The "do-nothing" **ALTERNATIVE** has been evaluated, and is not considered to be feasible and prudent.	X	☐

This alternative does not meet the purpose and need to correct the structurally deficient conditions of the roadway and may result in potential injury including loss of life. Safety conditions would continue to deteriorate.

NOTE: *Any response in a box requires additional information.*
Consult the "Nationwide" Section 4(f) Evaluation criteria.

	YES	**NO**
ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED (conclusion:)		
2. An **ALTERNATIVE** has been evaluated on the existing alignment which improves the highway without any *4(f)* impacts, and is also not considered to be feasible and prudent.	X	☐

Shifting the necessary improvements North would result in more detrimental and adverse effects due to the existing irrigation culverts located in the area for prime farmland.

	YES	**NO**
3. An **ALTERNATIVE** on a new location avoiding the *4(f)* site has been evaluated, and is not considered to be feasible and prudent.	X	☐

While an alternative location may avoid impact to Section 4(f) properties, it was not considered feasible and prudent. An alternative site would substantially increase construction cost and would result in detrimental environmental and/or economic impacts.

	YES	**NO**
Descriptions of **ALTERNATIVES 2**. and **3**. are attached.	X [2]	☐

[2] Descriptions are detailed above.

MINIMIZATION OF HARM

	YES	**NO**
1. The proposed project includes all possible planning to minimize harm.	X	☐

2. Measures to minimize harm include the following:

   a) Several trees that will be removed on two historic sites will be replanted with new trees outside the proposed new right-of-way boundary for the two sites.
   b) The initial plan would actually have required the removal of more trees than necessary in the preferred alternative.
   c) The proposed improvements will increase the safety of entrances to the sites.

COORDINATION

1. The proposed project has been **COORDINATED** with the following:

	YES	**NO**
a) SHPO (date: February 27, 1998)	X	☐
b) ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION (ACHP, date:)	_	☒ [3]

[3] ACHP coordination was not required since the proposed project would have no adverse effect on the sites. Letter was sent, no response received.

	YES	**NO**
c) Property owner	_	X[4]

[4] The property owner will be contacted as part of the right-of-way acquisition process.

	YES	**NO**
d) Local/State/Federal agencies	X	☐

SHPO, ACHP

2. One of the preceding had the following comment(s) regarding this proposed project, and/or the mitigation:

   SHPO's comments: They concurred with MDT's recommendations that the Ford Ranch and Murray Farmstead will qualify under specific criteria (A, B, and C for the Ford Ranch; A and C for the Murray Farmstead) and that there was a "No Adverse Effect" to the two sites.

SUMMARY

All required **ALTERNATIVES** have been evaluated and the proposed project meets all the criteria included in the "Nationwide Programmatic" *Section 4(f)* evaluation approved on December 23, 1986. This Programmatic Evaluation includes all possible planning to minimize harm which will be incorporated in this proposed project.

APPROVAL

This document is submitted pursuant to **49 U.S.C. 303** and in accordance with the provisions of **16 U.S.C. 470f**.

Barry Brosten

Date: 1/26/2000

Barry C. Brosten
Acting Engineering Bureau Chief
Environmental Services

Approved: Federal Highway Administration

Date: 2-8-2000

**"ALTERNATIVE ACCESSIBLE FORMATS OF THIS
PROVIDED ON REQUEST."**

JMM:BCB:jl